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ABSTRACT

Third in a series of six dealing with African culture and intended for secondary level students, this book deals with the ancient kingdoms of the Western Sudan, the early civilizations of East Africa, the coming of the Europeans, and the Atlantic slave trade. Almost all of the selections in the volume were written by Africans, and they come from a variety of sources including speeches, autobiographies, newspaper articles, historical documents, and archaeological evidence. This book is not meant to offer a complete history of Africa, its intention is to simply present a glimpse of a very long heritage. The basic purpose of the book is to capture some of the feelings, aspirations, and experiences of black Africans, and, by so doing, help the reader develop a sense of empathy and a feeling of identity with human beings everywhere, recognizing the common humanity that all men share. Discussion questions are provided for the selections. The selections in the first half of the book deal with the African past up to the coming of the European, around the year 1450. The three ancient kingdoms of the Western Sudan--Ghana, Mali, and Songhay--are the themes of the readings. Some selections also explore the value of the oral tradition and of archaeology in reconstructing a people's history. The second half of the book deals with the Africans' experience with Europeans, particularly in the slave trade, up to the beginning of the colonial period, in the second half of the nineteenth century. (Author/RM)

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LEON E. CLARK

Unit III of THROUGH AFRICAN EYES: CULTURES IN CHANGE

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When you deal with the past, you're dealing with history, you're dealing actually with the origin of a thing. When you know the origin, you know the cause. If you don't know the origin, you don't know the cause. And if you don't know the cause, you don't know the reason, you're just cut off, you're left standing in mid-air.

—MALCOLM X

Preface and Acknowledgments

Through African Eyes attempts to get "inside Africa" by going directly to the Africans themselves. Almost all the selections in this volume were written by Africans, and they come from a variety of sources: speeches, autobiographies, newspaper articles, historical documents, and archaeological evidence.

Unlike traditional textbooks, *Through African Eyes* does not try to "cover" all of Africa or to offer "expert" analysis by outside observers. Instead, it focuses on a few major themes and presents material that re-creates, as authentically and concretely as possible, the reality of African life. Interpretation is left up to the reader. In effect, *Through African Eyes* has two major goals: to let Africans speak for themselves, and to let students think for themselves.

This unit attempts to convey some of the greatness of Africa's past, so long obscured by foreign biases. Specifically, it deals with the ancient kingdoms of the Western Sudan—Ghana, Mali, and Songhay—and with the early civilizations of East Africa. The second half of the unit depicts the coming of the Europeans in the middle of the fifteenth century and its impact on Africans, particularly as manifested in the

Atlantic slave trade. The unit ends in the late nineteenth century with the end of the slave trade and the beginning of the age of treaties, which opened the way for European colonization in Africa.

In some ways, Africa may seem different from the West, and indeed it is. But in many more ways, Africans as people are similar to people anywhere in the world. Human beings, after all, no matter where they live, face the same basic needs: to eat, to work, to love, to play, and to get along with their fellow men. Learning how Africans manage their lives —sharing in their thoughts and theories, their emotions and dreams—should do more than provide a few insights into another continent or another culture. It should also help to lay bare the nature of the human condition. Perhaps the greatest justification for studying about other people is to learn about ourselves. If *Through African Eyes* helps to further this goal of self-knowledge and in the process reveals something of the uniqueness and the universality of African life, then it will serve its purpose.

* * *

Through African Eyes is the result of three years' work. It represents the first major product of the Educational Materials Project (EMPathy), a non-profit educational organization located in New York City. EMPathy was founded in June, 1967, for the express purpose of developing curricular materials for the study of other cultures in American schools and colleges.

The one man most responsible for the existence of EMPathy and hence for the development of the material represented by this book is Ward Morehouse, Director of the Center for International Programs and Comparative

Studies, New York State Education Department. His unwavering support of the project has been a constant source of both personal and professional inspiration. His colleagues Dr. Arthur Osteen and Norman Abramowitz have been equally helpful in keeping EMPathy alive.

Special thanks would go to Margaret Morgan for her research and for her many useful suggestions for the shaping of this unit; to the Conference on World Affairs for administrative support; and to Mrs. Gladys Topkis, of Praeger Publishers, Inc., for her sufferance.

The editor, of course, bears the ultimate responsibility for the selection of material, the over-all conception of the unit, and the connective writing in the text. He is also responsible for the adaptation of several of the selections.

LEON E. CLARK

The African Past and the Coming of the European

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Introduction

African history may well be the oldest in the world. The recent discoveries of Dr. Louis Leakey, a British archaeologist working in Tanzania, indicate that man has lived in Africa longer than any other place on earth—for more than 1,750,000 years. There is a good chance, then, that the history of man started in Africa.

Since that time, Africa has compiled a long list of accomplishments and made an impressive number of contributions to human history. The Western world, however, has not always recognized these contributions. For centuries, Africa has been thought of as the "dark continent," a land of naked savages, only one step beyond the Stone Age. We imagined a continent without any culture or history worth studying.

We Westerners are finally beginning to change our opinion, however. We now realize that "the darkness" was in our own minds. It was our own ignorance that prevented us from seeing the beauty in African culture and appreciating the contributions Africa has made to the world. Our recent awakening has taught us a number of new facts about Africa that may make us a little more humble:

—Before most Europeans had even thought of building cities, Africa had thriving metropolises that were centers of trade and technology.

—Before northern Europe had universities, Africa had

centers of learning at Timbuktu and Jenne that drew students from as far away as Rome and Greece.

—When Europe was still a collection of clans fighting to stay alive, Africa had great kingdoms with courts of law.

—When the Normans invaded a little-known island called England in 1066 A.D., they could muster an army of only 15,000 soldiers. In the same year the West African state of Ghana could put 200,000 warriors in the field.

—When the Arabs invaded Europe in the eighth century A.D., they were able to push all the way through Spain into France. When they invaded West Africa, they were stopped.

—When the Europeans were still pagans, in the fourth century A.D., the ancient kingdom of Ethiopia (then called Aksum) was a center of Christianity. In fact, Ethiopia is the oldest Christian empire in the world; its stone churches, built centuries ago, are among the wonders of the world.

These random facts hardly begin to tell the story of Africa's rich history. There are many more that might be mentioned. And there are still other facts that might not strike Westerners as significant but are nonetheless important. After all, Africans might consider the development of peaceful societies more significant than the development of great armies. They might consider the preservation of African religions more significant than the adoption of Christianity. In short, Africans might have their own idea of what constitutes an important history.

But no matter what standards we use, African history stands as an important pillar in the structure of human development. This raises the question of why the West neglected the study of African history for so long.

One answer lies in the way we define "history." Traditionally, Western scholars have relied largely, if not solely, on

written records for their information about the past. If a society did not keep written records—and most African societies did not—then that society did not have any history, *technically speaking.* But this is a very narrow definition of history. After all, if your grandfather tells you how he met your grandmother, you don't exclude this from your family history just because your grandfather didn't write it down. Or if your grandfather tells you what his grandfather told *him,* you don't assume that the information is false just because it isn't in a book. Nor do the Africans. In fact, most African societies have a well-developed system for passing information from generation to generation. This system is called the *oral tradition.*

Historians have come to realize the importance of the oral tradition in learning about the African past. It is possible to find historians today scurrying around Africa, tape recorders in hand, interviewing village elders in an attempt to capture the past before it is lost. The information they have gathered has helped change our view of African history.

Another source of information that has changed our view is archaeology. People leave *things* behind as well as words, and quite often these things provide as much information as documents or stories. Archaeologists can draw fairly detailed sketches of past cultures by examining the tools people used, the art they created, and the buildings they lived in. They can also tell us when the culture existed by using scientific methods of dating the objects they find.

Historians, then, have expanded their definition of history. They now include evidence from the oral tradition and from archaeology, as well as from written documents. As a result, they have made it possible (and necessary) for us to change our opinion of African history.

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Dr. Louis Leakey, famed British archaeologist, examines a piece of bone in Olduvai Gorge, in Tanzania. Dr. Leakey's findings indicate that East Africa may have been the first home of man. Such discoveries have contributed significantly to the rewriting of African history.

A second reason for the neglect of African history can be found in the slave trade. Europeans had a need to think that Africans were inferior human beings, or not human beings at all. How else could they justify slavery to themselves? As a result they denied—consciously and unconsciously—that Africans had any culture or history, thus making them little better than animals. This attitude persists today in the more extreme forms of racism. For this reason, then, many of the histories of Africa written by Europeans over the past 500 years have been tainted by racism and are therefore biased against the Africans. The white man simply

did not consider the black man his equal. Hence he did not recognize his accomplishments.

A third reason for the neglect of African history is closely related to the second. When Europeans first began to visit Africa, they kept written records of what they saw and did. Although these records are important historical documents, in most cases they revealed the activities of Europeans, not of Africans. Consequently, our history of Africa has often been the history of Europeans *in* Africa.

Moreover, when Europeans did write about Africans, they judged them according to their own (Western) standards. The result, of course, was a very slanted and negative interpretation of African life.

Many of these errors and oversights in the writing of African history are now being corrected. Historians are changing their narrow definition of history; Westerners are beginning to recognize their past (and present) biases; and, most important, Africans are writing their own history from an inside point of view.

In this unit we will try to look at African history through African eyes, wherever that is possible. The first half of the unit deals with the African past up to the coming of the European, around the year 1450. It also explores the value of the oral tradition and of archaeology in reconstructing a people's history. The second half deals with the Africans' experience with Europeans, particularly in the slave trade, up to the beginning of the colonial period, in the second half of the nineteenth century.

This book does not offer a complete history of Africa. It is not meant to do so. It simply presents a glimpse of a very long heritage—a heritage that the Western world is only now beginning to appreciate.

Ancient Ghana—Kingdom of Gold *

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: A continent as large as Africa produces not one but many histories, from many places. Perhaps the most spectacular history in Africa comes from the Western Sudan, the area which today includes Mauritania, Mali, and Senegal.

For more than 600 years, from approximately 1000–1600 A.D., a series of powerful empires developed in the Sudan that compared favorably in size and wealth to any empires in the world at that time. They certainly exceeded the medieval states of Europe in these respects. This period has since become known as the "golden age" of West African history.

The Western Sudan consists of grasslands, or savannas, that mark the southernmost border of the Sahara Desert and the beginning of black Africa. Despite the desert, however, the people living there have a long tradition of trading with the Arabs of North Africa. As early as 400 B.C., Arab traders made the difficult journey across the desert to exchange their salt and cloth for Sudanese gold and ivory. In fact, it was the Arabs who gave the name "Sudan," meaning "black," to these grasslands of Africa. They called the area *Bilad as-Sudan,* the land of the blacks.

Early trade was hazardous and sometimes unprofitable be-

* By Leon E. Clark.

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cause the horses and donkeys that carried the goods were ill-suited for desert travel. But around the year 100 A.D. the camel was imported from Asia. Not only did this animal have broad feet that did not sink into the sand, but it had the ability to store water and therefore could endure the long journeys between oases. Hundreds of camels could be linked together to form long caravans. As a result, trade became more profitable and grew. It was not until the late seventh century, however, that the trade really flourished.

Camel caravans are still used to transport goods across the Sahara Desert, employing the same elements of navigation as their ancestors: sun, stars, and wind patterns. Arab traders of North Africa made the dangerous trip to the Western Sudan as early as 400 B.C. Trade flourished after the introduction of the camel in A.D. 100.

At that time, the Muslims from the north invaded the Western Sudan, looking for converts to their religion as well as for increased trade.

This flurry of activity led to the formation of trading cities, which expanded into states and finally into empires. The first of these empires of the Western Sudan was Ghana.

It is estimated that Ghana existed as early as 400 A.D. Certainly by the year 800 it was a thriving trading center, and by 1070 it was one of the most powerful empires in the

world. The selection you are about to read deals with the high point of Ghana's development. It was written by the editor, but it is based on documents of the time, as well as on evidence derived from archaeology and from the oral tradition.

As you read "Ancient Ghana—Kingdom of Gold," think of these questions:

What are the factors that made Ghana a great empire?

How are these factors interrelated?]

The first time Ghana is mentioned in writing, in 772 A.D., it is called simply "the land of gold." In a sense, that brief description tells the whole story: namely, Ghana was very wealthy, and its wealth derived from gold.

A later writer, in the ninth century, went so far as to say that Ghana was "a country where gold grows like plants in the sand in the same way as carrots do, and is plucked at sunset." Still another writer described the king of Ghana as "the wealthiest of all kings on the face of the earth on account of the riches he owns and the hoards of gold acquired by him and inherited from his predecessors since ancient time."

In fact, the king of Ghana was called "master of gold." However, he called himself "Ghana," meaning "warrior king." And since all the kings of Ghana prefaced their names with the title "Ghana," visitors mistakenly thought that this was the name of the state. The real name of the kingdom was Kumbi, and the people who lived there were called the Soninke. They spoke a language belonging to a family of languages that is still spoken by many West Africans.

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The most complete account of ancient Ghana was written in 1067, at the height of Ghana's power, by the Arab scholar Al-Bakri. In describing the king's legal system, Al-Bakri gives us an idea of empire's wealth as well as of its advanced political structure, complete with subordinate kings and governors.

> The court of appeal is held in a domed pavilion around which stand ten horses with gold embroidered trappings. Behind the king stand ten pages holding shields and swords decorated with gold, and on his right are the sons of the subordinate kings of his country, all wearing splendid garments and with their hair mixed with gold. The governor of the city sits on the ground before the king, and around him are ministers seated likewise. At the door of the pavilion are dogs of excellent pedigree which, guarding the king, hardly ever leave the place where he is. Round their necks they wear collars of gold and silver, studded with a number of balls of the same metals.

Another Arab writer claims that the king at this time had "a nugget of pure gold weighing thirty pounds, of absolutely natural formation," to which he tied his horse. Another writer several centuries later contends that a seventh-century king of Ghana had 1,000 horses, each one of which "slept only on a carpet, with a silken rope for halter." Moreover, each horse had three personal servants to take care of its needs.

WEALTH THROUGH TRADE

How did Ghana develop such wealth? The answer, as we have suggested, was by trading in gold. But, interestingly, Ghana never owned any gold fields of its own. It simply

controlled the trade. The gold came from an area south of Ghana, called Wangara, which scholars place somewhere near the Senegal River. The Wangara people, who are related to the contemporary Fulani tribes of West Africa, never lost control of their gold to Ghana, but they needed to trade their gold for salt in order to survive. It might be said that the gold of Wangara was worth its weight in salt.

The salt did not come from Ghana but from the Sahara Desert and North Africa. The Arab traders of this region

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The need to measure gold in West Africa led to the development of goldweights, which the Ashanti people raised to the level of high art. Made of brass castings and standing only two or three inches high, these intricately carved weights sometimes depicted objects and activities of everyday life. The goldweight at left (2.6 in. high) shows women pounding grain; the man in the weight shown at right (1.8 in. high) is tapping wine from a palm tree.

wanted gold as much as the Wangara wanted salt, but both had to pass through Ghana to trade. Ghana thus was in the perfect position to serve as middleman. As long as it kept both sides happy, it was able to control the trade.

The Wangara and the Arabs never came face to face in the trade. Instead they conducted "dumb barter," or silent trade. When the Arabs arrived in Ghana with their salt (as well as other goods, such as silk, copper, and metal pots), they placed it in piles along the river, with each trader mark-

ing his own pile of goods for identification. They then beat drums to announce the opening of the market.

The Wangara, upon hearing the drums, would sail up the river with their gold and ivory. In the meantime, the Arabs would retreat about a half day's journey away. When the Wangara arrived at the market, they would place their gold alongside each pile of goods, based on their estimation of its worth, and then withdraw.

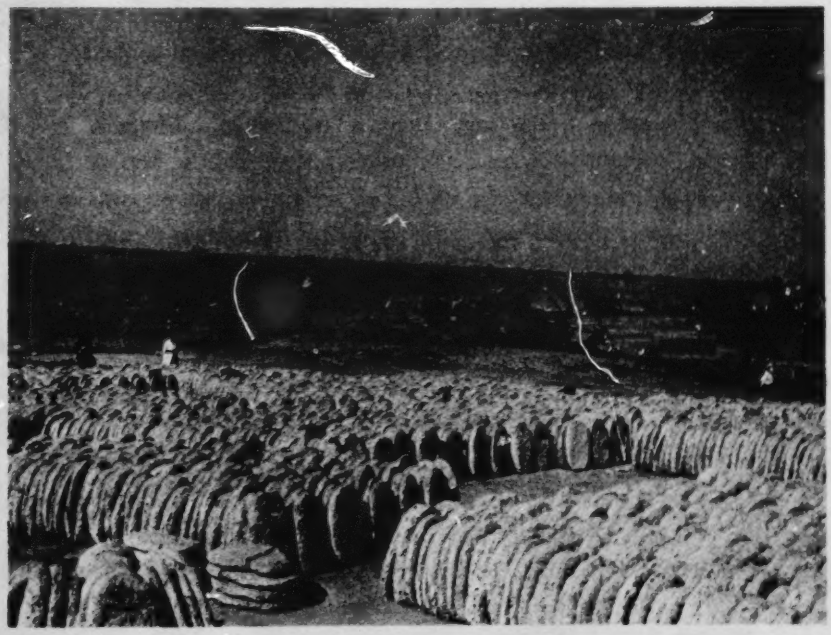
If the Arabs were satisfied with the amount of gold left, they would sound the drums again, signaling the end of the barter. If they were not satisfied, they simply retreated once again and waited for the Wangara to increase their payment. This back-and-forth process continued until both sides were satisfied.

How was Ghana able to control this trade? What services did it perform? After all, it produced neither the gold nor the salt. Why couldn't the Arabs and the Wangara conduct their own trade without Ghana?

One answer is power. Ghana controlled the land, as we have seen, but more important, it had the military forces to defeat its neighbors and absorb them into its empire, thereby gaining domination over the area. According to Al-Bakri, "When the king of Ghana calls up his army, he can put 200,000 men in the field, more than 40,000 of whom are bowmen." This was undoubtedly one of the largest armies in the world at the time.

Moreover, Ghana did provide services that allowed it to control the trade. First, because of the size of its army, it could maintain peace in the area, thereby assuring safe trade for the Arabs and the Wangara. Second, it maintained the value of the gold by limiting the amount that was traded. Al-Bakri writes, "The nuggets found in all the mines of this

country are reserved for the king, only gold dust being left for the people. Without this precaution, the people would accumulate gold until it had lost its value." Ghana, then, stabilized the trade by holding a monopoly over the gold. Again, it could do this because of its power.



Empires have risen and fallen on their ability to find supplies of salt, a scarce commodity in many parts of Africa. This picture shows slabs of solid salt, formed by filling small pools with spring water which soaks up salt from the desert and then evaporates.

But how did Ghana develop its power initially? After all, before it could afford its huge army, it had to have wealth, and before it developed its wealth, it had to have control over the territory through which the traders passed. How did it manage to defeat its neighbors?

FACTORS OF STRENGTH

There is no simple answer to this question. There are always many factors that lead to the domination of one state over another. In the case of Ghana, however, there are at least three or four factors that we can point to with assurance.

First, Ghana had superior technology. It had developed the art of iron work to the point where it could make spears. These weapons clearly gave Ghana an advantage in the field. Second, Ghana had excellent organization. At the top of the social system was the king. But under him, as we have seen, were subordinate kings and governors who ruled throughout the empire. They paid their final allegiance (as well as money) to the king, however, for in return they received protection and the right to rule their local areas.

An illustration of Ghana's excellent organization can be found in its tax system, an advanced social technique at the time. Al-Bakri writes: "For every donkey loaded with salt that enters the country, the king takes a duty of one golden *dinar* [⅛ oz. of gold] and two *dinars* from every one that leaves. From a load of copper the duty due to the king is five *mitqals* [worth one fifth of a *dinar*], and from a load of merchandise ten *mitqals*."

Another form of taxation involved food. The peasants living outside the trading centers contributed a certain amount of their production each year to the cities, thereby freeing the traders and craftsmen to do other work. Ghana's ability to feed its own people was another key factor in its rise to power.

A fourth factor, closely related to social organization, was that Ghana had strong and wise leadership. The king, al-

though he had a council of advisors, made all the important decisions himself. Moreover, he used his strength to ensure justice throughout the empire; he personally held court and judged cases. At the same time, the king could be diplomatic. For example, he invited the Muslim traders of the north to come to Ghana to live and allowed them to set up a town six miles away from his capital, in Kumbi. As long as the Muslims paid their taxes, they were welcome in Ghana.

Al-Bakri describes this agreement:

> The city of Ghana [Kumbi—with a population of 15,000] consists of two towns lying in a plain. One of these towns is inhabited by Muslims. It is large and possesses twelve mosques [Muslim houses of worship]. There are *imams* and *muezzins* [religious leaders] and assistants as well as jurists and learned men. Around the town are wells of sweet water from which they drink and near which they grow vegetables. The town in which the king lives is six miles from the Muslim one. The land between the two towns is covered with houses. The houses of the inhabitants are made of stone and acacia wood. The king has a palace and a number of dome-shaped dwellings, the whole surrounded by an enclosure like the defensive wall of a city. In the town where the king lives, and not far from the hall where he holds his court of justice, is a mosque where the Muslims pray when visiting on diplomatic missions.

The king of Ghana himself and most of his people followed their own traditional African religion. Their common belief was perhaps another factor making Ghana strong and unified. And certainly the king's ability to integrate different religions in his kingdom led to cooperation.

Ancient Ghana, then, was an extremely complex empire. It possessed many of the characteristics of powerful nations

today: wealth based on trade, sufficient food to feed its people, income derived from taxes, social organization that ensured justice and efficient political control, a strong army equipped with advanced weapons, and a foreign policy that led to peace and cooperation with other people.

Such advanced development is no small accomplishment for any nation at any time. Ghana was able to achieve it more than 1,000 years ago.

Modern Ghana *

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: The present-day nation of Ghana won its independence in 1957. A year earlier, when Ghana was still called the Gold Coast, Kwame Nkrumah, independence leader and Ghana's first president, made the following comments in a speech to the Gold Coast Assembly.]

The Government proposes that when the Gold Coast attains independence, the name of the country should be changed from "Gold Coast" to the new name of "Ghana." The name Ghana is rooted deeply in ancient African history, especially in the history of the western portion of Africa known as the Western Sudan. It kindles in the imagination of modern African youth the grandeur and the achievements of a great medieval civilization which our ancestors developed many centuries before European penetration and subsequent domination of Africa began. According to tradition, the various peoples or tribal groups in the Gold Coast were

* Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, New York: Praeger, 1961, pp. 67-68.

originally members of the great Ghana Empire that developed in the Western Sudan during the medieval period.

For the one thousand years that the Ghana Empire existed, it spread over a wide expanse of territory in the Western Sudan. Its influence stretched across the Sudan from Lake Chad in the east to the Futa Jalon Mountains in the west and from the southern fringes of the Sahara Desert in the north to the Bights of Benin and Biafra in the south. Thus the Ghana Empire was known to have covered what is now the greater part of West Africa—namely, from Nigeria in the east to Senegambia in the west. While it existed, the Ghana Empire carried on extensive commercial relations with the outside world—extending as far as Spain and Portugal. Gold, animal skins, ivory, kolanuts, gums, honey, corn, and cotton were among the articles that writers had most frequently named. It is reported that Egyptian, European, and Asiatic students attended the great and famous universities and other institutions of higher learning that flourished in Ghana during the medieval period to learn philosophy, mathematics, medicine, and law.

It is from this rich historical background that the name Ghana has been proposed as the new name of the Gold Coast upon the attainment of independence; we take pride in the name, not out of romanticism, but as an inspiration for the future.

The Kingdom of Mali

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: As we have seen, Ghana was the first of the great West African kingdoms because of its development and control of the trans-Saharan trade in gold. But like all empires, it did not last forever. In the eleventh century, the Muslims from the north made repeated attacks on Ghana. They never succeeded in subjugating the empire, but they weakened it enough to make way for the second of the great Sudanic states, Mali.

The empire of Mali had existed as early as the year 1000, and when Ghana fell apart 100 years later, it was able to form a new and powerful state. Using the same methods as Ghana for controlling trade and administering its territory, Mali went on to become even more wealthy and powerful than its predecessor.

The man most responsible for Mali's rise to greatness was Sundiata Keita, who ruled from 1230 to 1255. He not only succeeded in capturing the gold fields of Wangara but expanded the old Ghana empire to include large stretches of the Sahara to the north and east, as well as parts of present-day Guinea and Senegal, to the south and west.

We will learn more about Sundiata in the next selection. Here we will learn of a later king of Mali, Mansa Musa, who followed Sundiata by almost sixty years (he was in fact Sundiata's grandnephew) and became even more powerful and famous than Sundiata.

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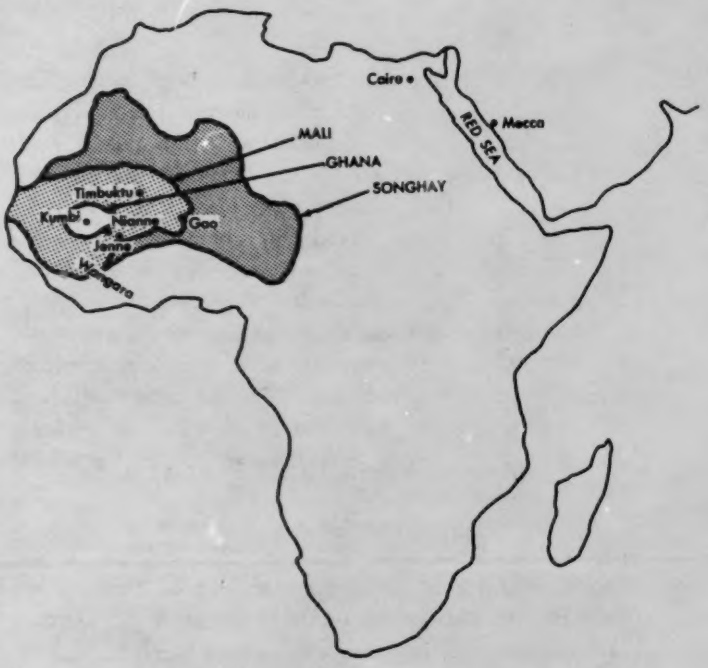
Mansa Musa ascended the throne in 1312 and immediately established himself as an excellent administrator. Building on the foundations laid by Sundiata, he expanded the empire even further, absorbing the trading centers of Timbuktu and Gao. He also united the various chiefs in the empire under his strong rule. The result was that by the time of Musa's death, in 1337, Mali had become one of the largest empires in the world and by far the richest that Africa has ever known.



The selection that follows describes Mansa Musa's pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324. By this time, most of the leaders in the Western Sudan, and many of the people, were Muslim. It is traditional for all Muslims to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime, if at all possible.

During his trip, Mansa Musa dazzled the city of Cairo with his wealth, much of which he gave away to charity. It is said that Mansa Musa's caravan consisted of 60,000 people and 100 camels, each carrying 300 pounds of gold dust.

The rest of this selection deals with the size of Mansa Musa's empire and the nature of his rule. You will notice that the Muslim religion, which Musa followed devoutly, plays an important role in the legal system of Mali.

The entire selection consists of five parts: the first three were written by Ibn Fadl Allah al Omari; the last two, by Ibn Battuta. Both writers were important Arab scholars of the fourteenth century. Al Omari visited Cairo only twelve years after Mansa Musa's famous visit. Ibn Battuta visited Mali personally.

As you read this selection, think of these questions:

What evidence can you find of Mansa Musa's power and authority?

How does Mansa Musa's attitude toward the Egyptians show the importance of Mali?]

MANSA MUSA GOES TO CAIRO*

During my first journey to Cairo and sojourn there I heard talk of the arrival of the Sultan Musa [Mansa Musa, emperor of Mali] and I found the Cairenes [residents of Cairo] very glad to talk of the large expenditures of those people.

* This section and the next two—"The Extent of the Empire" and "The Court"—are from Ibn Fadl Allah al Omari, *Masalik al Absar Fi Mamalik al Amsar*, translated by Basil Davidson from the French version of Gaudefroy-Demombynes (Paris, 1927); reprinted from Basil Davidson, *The African Past*, Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1964, pp. 75-79. Copyright © 1964 by Basil Davidson. Used by permission of Atlantic-Little, Brown & Co. and the Longman Group Ltd.

I questioned the Emir [the Muslim leader], who spoke of the sultan's noble appearance, dignity, and trustworthiness. "When I went out to greet him in the name of the glorious Sultan el Malik en Nasir [of Egypt]," he told me, "he gave me the warmest of welcomes and treated me with the most careful politeness. But he would talk to me only through an interpreter [that is, his spokesman or linguist] although he could speak perfect Arabic. He carried his imperial treasure in many pieces of gold, worked or otherwise.

"I suggested that he [Mansa Musa] should go up to the palace and meet the Sultan [of Egypt]. But he refused, saying: 'I came for the pilgrimage, and for nothing else, and I do not wish to mix up my pilgrimage with anything else.' He argued about this. However, I well understood that the meeting was repugnant to him because he was loath to kiss the ground [before the Sultan] or to kiss his hand. I went on insisting and he went on making excuses. But imperial protocol obliged me to present him and I did not leave him until he had agreed.

"When he came into the Sultan's presence we asked him to kiss the ground. But he refused and continued to refuse, saying: 'However can this be?' Then a wise man of his suite whispered several words to him that I could not understand. 'Very well,' he thereupon declared, 'I will prostrate myself before Allah who created me and brought me into the world.' Having done so he moved toward the Sultan. The latter rose for a moment to welcome him and asked him to sit beside him: then they had a long conversation. After Sultan Musa had left the palace the Sultan of Cairo sent him gifts of clothing for himself, his courtiers, and all those who were with him; saddled and bridled horses for himself and his chief officers. . . .

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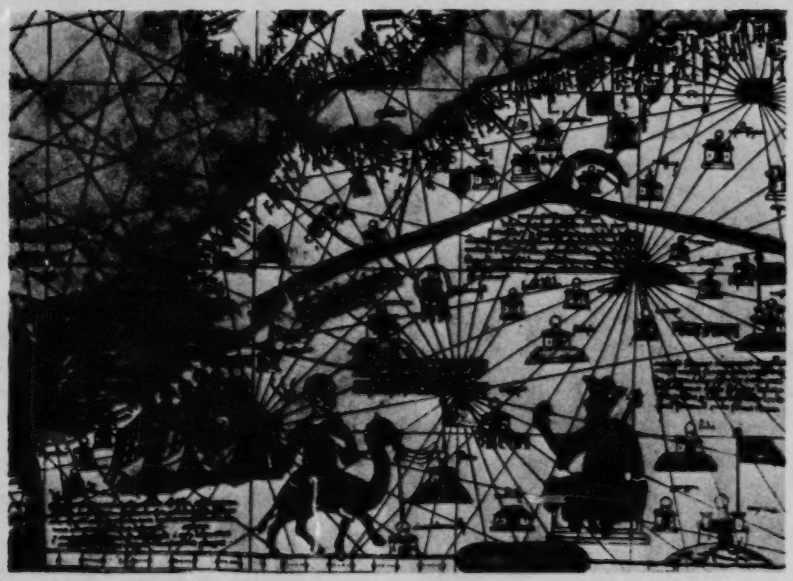
"When the time of pilgrimage arrived, [the Sultan of Egypt] sent him a large quantity of drachmas [Egyptian coins], baggage camels, and choice riding-camels with saddles and harness. [The Sultan of Egypt] caused abundant quantities of foodstuffs to be bought for [Musa's] suite and his followers, established posting-stations for the feeding of the animals, and gave to the emirs of the pilgrimage a written order to look after and respect [the Emperor of Mali]. When the latter returned it was I who went to greet him and settle him into his quarters. . . .

"This man," el Mehmendar also told me, "spread upon Cairo the flood of his generosity: there was no person, officer



Mansa Musa, king of Ancient Mali, holds a huge gold nugget in his hand, attracting an Arab trader. This map, drawn in 1375, comes from Catalan, Spain. The extent of the Mali empire is shown by the defensive wall arching across the Sahara Desert in the upper part of the picture.

of the court, or holder of any office of the [Cairo] sultanate who did not receive a sum in gold from him. The people of Cairo earned incalculable sums from him, whether by buying and selling or by gifts. So much gold was current in Cairo that it ruined the value of money. . . ."

Let me add that gold in Egypt had enjoyed a high rate of exchange up to the moment of their arrival. The gold *mitqal* that year had not failen below twenty-five drachmas. But from that day [of Musa's arrival] onward, its value dwindled; the exchange was ruined, and even now it has not recovered. The *mitqal* scarcely touches twenty-two drachmas. That is how it has been for twelve years from that time, because of the great amounts of gold they brought to Egypt and spent there.

THE EXTENT OF THE MALI EMPIRE

The king of this country is known to the people of Egypt as the king of Tekrur; but he himself becomes indignant when he is called thus, since Tekrur is only one of the countries of his empire [roughly, inland Senegal]. The title he prefers is . . . lord of Mali, the largest of his states; it is the name by which he is most known. He is the most important of the Muslim Negro kings; his land is the largest, his army the most numerous; he is the king who is the most powerful, the richest, the most fortunate, the most feared by his enemies, and the most able to do good to those around him. . . .

The honorable and truthful Sheikh Abu Sa'id Otman ed Dukkali, who has lived in the town of Niane for thirty-five years and traveled throughout the kingdom, has told me that this is square in shape, being four months [of travel] in length and at least as much in breadth. . . .

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The sultan of this country has sway over the land of the "desert of gold," whence they bring him gold every year. The inhabitants of that land are savage pagans whom the sultan would subject to him if he wished. But the sovereigns of this kingdom have learned by experience that whenever one of them has conquered one of these gold towns, established Islam there, and sounded the call to prayer, the harvest of gold dwindles and falls to nothing; meanwhile it grows and expands in neighboring pagan countries. When experience had confirmed them in this observation, they left the gold country in the hands of its pagan inhabitants and contented themselves with assuring their obedience and paying tribute.

THE COURT

The sultan of this kingdom presides in his palace on a great balcony, called *bembe,* where he has a great seat of ebony that is like a throne fit for a large and tall person: on either side it is flanked by elephant tusks turned toward each other. His arms stand near him, being all of gold—saber, lance, quiver, bow, and arrows. He wears wide trousers made of about twenty pieces [of cloth], of a kind which he alone may wear.

Behind him there stand about a score of Turkish or other pages which are bought for him in Cairo: one of them, at his left, holds a silk umbrella surmounted by a dome and a bird of gold: the bird has the figure of a falcon. His officers are seated in a circle about him, in two rows, one to the right and one to the left; beyond them sit the chief commanders of his cavalry.

In front of him there is a person who never leaves him

and who is his executioner; also another who serves as intermediary [that is, official spokesman] between the sovereign and his subjects, and who is named the herald. In front of them, again, there are drummers. Others dance before their sovereign, who enjoys this, and make him laugh. Two banners are spread behind him. Before him they keep two saddled and bridled horses in case he should wish to ride.

Arab horses are brought for sale to the kings of this country, who spend considerable sums in this way. Their army numbers 100,000 men of whom there are about 10,000 horse-mounted cavalry: the others are infantry having neither horses nor any other mounts. They have camels in this country but do not know the art of riding them with a saddle. . . .

The officers of this king, his soldiers, and his guard receive gifts of land and presents. Some among the greatest of them receive as much as 50,000 *mitqals* of gold a year, besides which the king provides them with horses and clothing. He is much concerned with giving them fine garments and making his cities into capitals.

POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE*

On certain days the sultan holds audiences in the palace yard, where there is a platform under a tree, with three steps; this they call the *pempi.* It is carpeted with silk and has cushions placed on it. [Over it] is raised the umbrella which is a sort of pavilion made of silk, surmounted by a bird in gold, about the size of a falcon.

* Ibn Battuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa: 1325-1354,* translated by Sir Hamilton Gibb, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1929, pp. 326-29. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

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The city of Jenne, one of the major trading centers of Ancient Mali, exhibits the architectural styles typical of the Western Sudan. The buildings are constructed of clay, made from the sand of the Sahara. The ornate structure shown below is a mosque.

The sultan comes out of a door in a corner of the palace, carrying a bow in his hand and a quiver on his back. On his head he has a golden skullcap, bound with a gold band which has narrow ends shaped like knives, more than a span in length. His usual dress is a velvety red tunic, made of the European fabric called *mutanfas.* The sultan is preceded by his musicians, who carry gold and silver *guimbris* [two-stringed guitars], and behind him come three hundred armed slaves.

He walks in a leisurely fashion, affecting a very slow movement, and even stops from time to time. On reaching the *pempi* he stops and looks round the assembly, then ascends it in the sedate manner of a preacher ascending a mosque-pulpit. As he takes his seat the drums, trumpets, and bugles are sounded. Three slaves go out at a run to summon the sovereign's deputy and the military commanders, who enter and sit down. Two saddled and bridled horses are brought, along with two goats, which they hold to serve as a protection against the evil eye. Dugha [musician] stands at the gate and the rest of the people remain in the street, under the trees.

The Negroes are of all people the most submissive to their king and the most abject in their behavior before him. They swear by his name. . . . If he summons any of them while he is holding an audience in his pavilion, the person summoned takes off his clothes and puts on warm garments, removes his turban, and dons a dirty skullcap, and enters with his garments and trousers raised knee-high. He goes forward in an attitude of humility and dejection, knocks the ground hard with his elbows, then stands with bowed head and bent back listening to what [the sultan] says.

If anyone addresses the king and receives a reply from

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him, [that person] uncovers his back and throws dust over his head and back, for all the world like a bather splashing himself with water. I used to wonder how it was they did not blind themselves. If the sultan delivers any remarks during his audience, those present take off their turbans and put them down, and listen in silence to what he says.

Sometimes one of them stands up before him and recalls his deeds in the sultan's service, saying "I did so-and-so on such a day" or "I killed so-and-so on such a day." Those who have knowledge of this confirm his words, which they do by plucking the cord of the bow and releasing it [with a twang], just as an archer does when shooting an arrow. If the sultan says "truly spoken" or thanks him, [the man] removes his clothes and "dusts." That is their idea of good manners.

SECURITY AND JUSTICE*

Among the admirable qualities of these people, the following are to be noted:

1. The small number of acts of injustice that one finds there; for the Negroes are of all peoples those who most abhor injustice. The sultan pardons no one who is guilty of it.

2. The complete and general safety one enjoys throughout the land. The traveler has no more reason than the man who stays at home to fear brigands, thieves, or ravishers.

3. The blacks do not confiscate the goods of white men

* Ibn Battuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa: 1325-1354*, translated by Basil Davidson from the French version of Defremery and Sanguinetti (Paris, 1854); reprinted in *The African Past*, by Basil Davidson, Boston, Little, Brown & Co., 1964, pp. 81-83. Copyright © 1964 by Basil Davidson. Used by permission of Atlantic-Little, Brown & Co. and the Longman Group Ltd.

(that is, of North Africans) who die in their country, not even when these consist of big treasures. They deposit them, on the contrary, with a man of confidence among the whites until those who have a right to the goods present themselves and take possession.

4. They make their prayers punctually; they assiduously attend their meetings of the faithful, and punish their children if they should fail in this. On Fridays, anyone who is late at the mosque will find nowhere to pray, the crowd is so great. Their custom is to send their servants to the mosque to spread their prayer-mats in the due and proper place, and to remain there until they, the masters, should arrive. . . .

5. The Negroes wear fine white garments on Fridays. If by chance a man has no more than one shirt . . . at least he washes it before putting it on to go to public prayer.

6. They zealously learn the Koran [the Muslim holy book] by heart. Those children who are neglectful in this are put in chains until they have memorized the Koran. On one festival day I visited the *qadi* and saw children thus enchained and asked him: "Will you not let them free?" He replied: "Only when they know their Koran by heart."

Another day I was passing by a young Negro, a handsome lad and very well dressed, who had a heavy chain on his feet. I said to my companion: "What's happened to the boy? Has he murdered someone?" The young Negro heard what I had said and began laughing. "They have chained him," I was told, "simply to make him memorize the Koran."

Griots: The Oral Tradition *

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: Much of our information about Mali comes from the oral tradition. Indeed, much of our information about the early history of every part of the world comes to us through legends that were transmitted orally. But the oral history of West Africa is particularly important because of a remarkable group of people called *griots* (pronounced *gree-o*).

The griots are professional historians, specially trained through years of study to remember all the important facts about their people, which they hand down from generation to generation. They are also poets and musicians—a type of troubadour. But they are more than this. Traditionally, griots have been assigned to important families, most notably to kings, whom they serve as advisors, masters of ceremonies, and official spokesmen. In the last selection, both the herald for Mansa Musa and the musician were griots.

For many centuries, then, the griots have been close to the seats of power. They have served as intermediaries between the rulers and the people. As court historians, they have also had the responsibility of reminding kings of the

* D. T. Niane, *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*, translated by G. D. Pickett, London: Longman, Green & Co., Ltd., 1965, pp. 1-3, 83-84; originally published by Présence Africaine (Paris) in 1960 under the title *Soundjata ou l'epopée mandingue*. Reprinted by permission of Longmans, Green, Humanities Press, and Présence Africaine.

traditions they must uphold. The kings listened because the griots knew of what they spoke; today historians are beginning to listen too.

In this selection you will meet a living griot, from Guinea. His name is Djeli Mamoudou Kouyaté, and for centuries his family has served the Keita princes of Mali, including Sundiata Keita, the first great ruler of ancient Mali.

As you read this selection, think of these questions:

How reliable do you think his information is? Why?

What are the responsibilities of the griot?

What could a historian do with this information?]

I am a griot. It is I, Djeli Mamoudou Kouyaté, son of Bintou Kouyaté and Djeli Kedian Kouyaté, master in the art of eloquence. Since time immemorial the Kouyatés have been in the service of the Keita princes of Mali; we are vessels of speech, we are the repositories which harbor secrets many centuries old. The art of eloquence has no secrets for us; without us the names of kings would vanish into oblivion, we are the memory of mankind; by the spoken word we bring to life the deeds and exploits of kings for younger generations.

I derive my knowledge from my father, Djeli Kedian, who also got it from his father; history holds no mystery for us; we teach to the vulgar just as much as we want to teach them, for it is we who keep the keys to the twelve doors of Mali [i.e., the twelve provinces of which Mali was originally composed].

I know the list of all the sovereigns who succeeded to the

throne of Mali. I know how the black people divided into tribes, for my father bequeathed to me all his learning; I know why such and such is called Kamara, another Keita, and yet another Sibibé or Traoré; every name has a meaning, a secret import.

I teach kings the history of their ancestors so that the lives of the ancients might serve them as an example, for the world is old, but the future springs from the past.

My word is pure and free of all untruth; it is the word of my father; it is the word of my father's father. I will give you my father's words just as I received them; royal griots do not know what lying is. When a quarrel breaks out between tribes it is we who settle the difference, for we are the depositaries of oaths which the ancestors swore.

Listen to my word, you who want to know; by my mouth you will learn the history of Mali. By my mouth you will get to know the story of the ancestor of great Mali, the story of him who, by his exploits, surpassed even Alexander the Great; he who, from the East, shed his rays upon all the countries of the West.

Listen to the story of the son of the Buffalo, the son of the Lion. I am going to tell you of Maghan Sundiata, of Mari-Djata, of Sogolon Djata, or Naré Maghan Djata; the man of many names against whom sorcery could avail nothing.

THE FIRST KINGS OF MALI

Listen, then, sons of Mali, children of the black people, listen to my word, for I am going to tell you of Sundiata, the father of the Bright Country, of the savanna land, the ancestor of those who draw the bow, the master of a hundred

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vanquished kings. I am going to talk of Sundiata, Manding Diara, Lion of Mali, Sogolon Djata, son of Sogolon, Naré Maghan Djata, son of Naré Maghan, Sogo Sogo Simbon Salaba, hero of many names. I am going to tell you of Sundiata, he whose exploits will astonish men for a long time yet. He was great among kings; he was peerless among men; he was beloved of God because he was the last of the great conquerors.

Right at the beginning, then, Mali was a province of the Bambara kings; those who are today called Mandingo, inhabitants of Mali, are not indigenous [local]; they come from the East. Bilali Bounama, ancestor of the Keitas, was the faithful servant of the Prophet Muhammad (may the peace of God be upon him). Bilali Bounama had seven sons of whom the eldest, Lawalo, left the Holy City and came to settle in Mali; Lawalo had Latal Kalabi for a son, Latal Kalabi had Damul Kalabi, who then had Lahilatoul Kalabi.

Lahilatoul Kalabi was the first black prince to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. On his return he was robbed by brigands in the desert; his men were scattered and some died of thirst, but God saved Lahilatoul Kalabi, for he was a righteous man. He called upon the Almighty, and jinn [the spirit] appeared and recognized him as king. After seven years' absence Lahilatoul was able to return, by the grace of Allah the Almighty, to Mali, where none expected to see him any more.

Lahilatoul Kalabi had two sons, the elder being called Kalabi Bomba and the younger Kalabi Dauman; the elder chose royal power and reigned, while the younger preferred fortune and wealth and became the ancestor of those who go from country to country seeking their fortune.

Kalabi Bomba had Mamadi Kani for a son. Mamadi

Kani was a hunter king like the first kings of Mali; . . . he communicated with the jinn of the forest and bush. These spirits had no secrets from him, and he was loved by Kondolon Ni Sané [gods of the chase]. His followers were so numerous that he formed them into an army which became formidable; he often gathered them together in the bush and taught them the art of hunting. It was he who revealed to hunters the medicinal leaves which heal wounds and cure diseases. Thanks to the strength of his followers, he became king of a vast country; with them Mamadi Kani conquered all the lands which stretch from the Sankarani to the Bouré. Mamadi Kani had four sons—Kani Simbon, Kamignogo Simbon, Kabala Simbon, and Simbon Tagnogokelin. They were all initiated into the art of hunting and deserved the title of Simbon [great hunter]. It was the lineage of Bamari Tagnogokelin which held on to the power; his son was M'Bali Nènè, whose son was Bello. Bello's son was called Bello Bakon, and he had a son called Maghan Kon Fatta, also called Frako Maghan Keigu, Maghan the handsome.

Maghan Kon Fatta was the father of the great Sundiata and had three wives and six children—three boys and three girls. His first wife was called Sassouma Bérété, daughter of a great divine; she was the mother of King Dankaran Touman and Princess Nana Triban. The second wife, Sogolon Kedjou, was the mother of Sundiata and the two princesses Sogolon Kolonkan and Sogolon Djamarou. The third wife was one of the Kamaras and was called Namandjé; she was the mother of Manding Bory (or Manding Bakary), who was the best friend of his half-brother Sundiata. . . .

A young historian from the Ivory Coast tapes the ancient legends of the Akan people, as told by one of the chiefs. Notice the drum accompaniment in the background.

ETERNAL MALI

Mali keeps its secrets jealously. There are things which the uninitiated will never know, for the griots, their depositaries, will never betray them. Maghan Sundiata, the last conqueror on earth, lies not far from Niani-Niani at Balandougou. . . .

After him many kings and many Mansas [sultans] reigned over Mali, and other towns sprang up and disappeared. Hajji Mansa Moussa [Musa], of illustrious memory, beloved of God, built houses at Mecca for pilgrims coming from Mali, but the towns which he founded have all disappeared. Karaniana, Bouroun-Kouna—nothing more remains of these towns. Other kings carried Mali far beyond Djata's frontiers —for example, Mansa Samanka and Fadima Moussa—but none of them came near Djata.

Maghan Sundiata was unique. In his own time no one equalled him, and after him no one had the ambition to surpass him. He left his mark on Mali for all time, and his taboos still guide men in their conduct.

Mali is eternal. To convince yourself of what I have said go to Mali. At Tigan you will find the forest dear to Sundiata. There you will see Fakoli Koroma's plastron [medieval breastplate]. Go to Kirikoroni near Niassola and you will see a tree which commemorates Sundiata's passing through these parts. Go to Bankoumana on the Niger and you will see Soumaoro's balafon [xylophone-like musical instrument]. Go to Ka-ba and you will see the clearing of Kouroukan Fougan, where the great assembly took place which gave Sundiata's empire its constitution. Go to Krina near Ka-ba and you will see the bird that foretold the end to Soumaoro. At Keyla, near Ka-ba, you will find the royal drums belong-

ing to Djolofin Mansa, king of Senegal, whom Djata defeated. But never try, wretch, to pierce the mystery which Mali hides from you. Do not go and disturb the spirits in their eternal rest. Do not ever go into the dead cities to question the past, for the spirits never forgive. Do not seek to know what is not to be known.

Men of today, how small you are beside your ancestors, and small in mind too, for you have trouble in grasping the meaning of my words. Sundiata rests near Niani-Niani, but his spirit lives on, and today the Keitas still come and bow before the stone under which lies the father of Mali.

To acquire my knowledge I have journeyed all round Mali. At Kita I saw the mountain where the lake of holy water sleeps; at Segou I learned the history of the kings of Do and Kri; at Fadama, in Hamana, I heard the Kondé griots relate how the Keitas, Kondés, and Kamaras conquered Wouroula. At Keyla, the village of the great masters, I learned the origins of Mali and the art of speaking. Everywhere I was able to see and understand what my masters were teaching me, but between their hands I took an oath to teach only what is to be taught and to conceal what is to be kept concealed.

Sun, Science, and History *

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: The oral tradition in Africa is not always preserved by "professionals," such as griots. Sometimes it is simply the responsibility of the elders to pass on their knowledge to the younger generation. In either case, the responsibility is taken very seriously.

The information, however, no matter how accurate it is, refers to only one family or group of people. How do we know the dates of these events? The following selection, by a famous historian of Africa, Basil Davidson, illustrates one way in which the oral tradition can be dated.

What other techniques of dating can you think of?]

Some fifty years ago, in a clearing of the Congo forest, a Hungarian in Belgian service sat making notes. For the time and place this Hungarian, Emil Torday, was an unusual sort of man, an unusual sort of European. What he wanted was neither rubber nor ivory nor conscript labor, but information about the past.

And he had come far in search of it. After traveling for many hundred miles up the Congo River from its Atlantic mouth he had continued on his way into the heart of Africa. He had traveled up the Kasai River and then along the banks of the Sankuru, and now, somewhere in the dense green

* Basil Davidson, *The Lost Cities of Africa*, Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1959, pp. 3-4; published as *Old Africa Rediscovered* by Victor Gollancz Ltd. Copyright © 1959 by Basil Davidson. Reprinted by permission of Atlantic-Little, Brown & Co. and Victor Gollancz Ltd.

middle of an Africa that was almost completely unknown to the outside world, he had reached the Bushongo people, and sat listening to their chiefs and making notes.

For the benefit of this European, one of the first they had ever set eyes on, the elders of the Bushongo recalled the legends and tradition of their past. That was not in the least difficult for them, since remembering the past was one of their duties. They unrolled their story in measured phrases. They went on and on. They were not to be hurried. They traversed the list of the kings, a list of one hundred and twenty names, right back to the god-king whose marvels had founded their nation.

It was splendid, but was it history? Could any of these kings be given a date, be linked—at least in time—to the history of the rest of the world? Torday was an enthusiast and went on making notes, but he longed for a date. And quite suddenly they gave it to him.

"As the elders were talking of the great events of various reigns," he remembered afterwards, "and we came to the ninety-eighth chief, Bo Kama Bomanchala, they said that nothing remarkable had happened during his reign, except that one day at noon the sun went out, and there was absolute darkness for a short time.

"When I heard this I lost all self-control. I jumped up and wanted to do something desperate. The elders thought that I had been stung by a scorpion.

"It was only months later that the date of the eclipse became known to me . . . the thirtieth of March, 1680, when there was a total eclipse of the sun, passing exactly over Bushongo. . . .

"There was no possibility of confusion with another eclipse, because this was the only one visible in the region during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries."

These giant walls, measuring 30 feet high and several feet thick, form part of the ruins of Great Zimbabwe, a southern African kingdom of the eleventh century. The word "zimbabwe" means stone houses in the Bantu language.

Located in the center of what is now Rhodesia, the ruins of Zimbabwe were discovered in 1868 by a European hunter wandering through the bush. At the time, many Europeans thought they were left by white men who had passed through the area. Not only did the ruins indicate an advanced civilization, but they displayed a building technique found nowhere else in Africa. (Notice the skillful way in which the stones are placed one on top of another.) Moreover, gold objects were found, which led some Europeans to speculate that Zimbabwe was the site of the legendary King Solomon's mines.

However, when archaeologists investigated Zimbabwe in 1905 and again in 1929, they found "not one single item that was not in accordance with the claim of Bantu origin and medieval date." Zimbabwe was indeed a great African kingdom. It was also a major source of gold. Because of a shortage of salt, the inhabitants had moved north by the time the Europeans arrived, in the sixteenth century.

The case of Zimbabwe is an excellent example of how archaeology can help to solve the "mysteries" of African history. And when the future histories of Africa are written, Zimbabwe may well appear again, this time as the name of a "new" African nation. The nationalists in Rhodesia today, struggling to overthrow the minority white government, refer to their country as Zimbabwe.

*White Rhodesians Deny Zimbabwe—Past and Present**

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: The next selection shows how the past can be distorted for modern political purposes. The white Rhodesians, in the face of scientific evidence, deny that Africans built Great Zimbabwe. The reason: they want to eliminate a source of pride and inspiration to the nationalist movement which is struggling to free black Rhodesians from white rule. The white Rhodesians clearly recognize the influence of the past on the present and the future. They think that by denying the Zimbabwe of the past they can prevent the creation of the Zimbabwe of the future.]

SALISBURY, Rhodesia, October 11—The ruins of Zimbabwe, identified by archaeologists who have worked at the site as the remains of a medieval Bantu city, have become an issue in the racial politics of Rhodesia.

White political leaders are inveighing against the findings

* "Zimbabwe Ruins Become Issue in the Racial Politics of Rhodesia," Special to *The New York Times*, October 12, 1969. © 1968/1969 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.

of the archaeologists, denying that a Bantu people could have built the stone temple and citadel found crumbling in a valley more than 100 miles south of here about 1870.

The white critics contend that the indigenous people could not have possessed the skill to construct the dry-stone edifices, to smelt the gold, to carve the sculptures, and to mold the pottery that have been uncovered at Zimbabwe and similar ruins that stretch south of there across the Limpopo River into South Africa.

Carbon-dating tests have placed the construction at some time between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries, and possibly as late as the seventeenth. The method of archaeological dating appeared to have destroyed the romantic theories advanced in the past that linked Zimbabwe with the ancient Egyptians, Phoenicians, Sabeans, or Indians.

But the recent discovery of a Zimbabwe-type ruin at Bindura, 57 miles from Salisbury, has brought attacks on the archaeologists from white politicians in a territory that chose four years ago to seize independence from Britain rather than surrender white-supremacy policies.

Colonel George Hartley, deputy speaker in the legislative assembly, attacked the archaeologists and even a brochure issued by the Government Information Department. In a speech in Parliament, he said that the Zimbabwe ruins, which are in his district, were causing concern in his constituency.

"There is one trend running through the whole presentation of the image of the ruins, which apparently is being directed to promoting the notion that these buildings were erected by the indigenous people of Rhodesia," he said.

"This may be a very popular Zimbabwe African People's notion for adherents of the Union [black African-nationalist movements, banned in Rhodesia] and the Organization of

African Unity, but I wish to make the suggestion that this notion is nothing but sheer conjecture."

He called for publicity for other theories on the origin of the ruins. He was supported by Lance Smith, Minister of Internal Affairs, who said that he had been approached by "people with knowledge and background" who had said that the origin of Zimbabwe was still a mystery.

The issue of Zimbabwe, which archaeologists acknowledge has not been completely solved, has caused a stir in the letters-to-the-editor columns of the Rhodesian press. Many of the letters attacked Professor R. Inskeep, of Capetown University, who in a recent visit to Salisbury criticized uninformed laymen who challenge the findings of reputable archaeologists "for what one can only assume are political reasons."

Some of Rhodesia's leading archaeologists, employed by the Historical Monuments Commission and the National Museum, have declined to be drawn into the controversy. Apparently, as employes of statutory bodies, they wish to avoid expressing views that could be construed as political.

The Rise of Songhay *

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: The third and last of the great early empires of the Western Sudan was Songhay. It existed as early as the ninth century, but it did not rise to great power until the decline of Mali, in the fifteenth century.

After Mansa Musa's death in 1332, Mali began to lose control of its empire. First the important trading centers of Gao and Timbuktu reasserted their independence from Mali, which they had lost to Mansa Musa in 1325, and then eventually the whole empire collapsed. Mali's long fall from greatness, however, took almost 150 years.

The three empires ruled in approximately these periods: Ghana, 900-1067 A.D.; Mali, 1240-1332; Songhay, 1464-1528. The years in between are periods in which the declining empire had not yet lost all its former power and the new empire had not yet gained complete control.

The first section of this reading describes the capture of Timbuktu in 1468 by Sunni Ali Ber, the founder of the Songhay empire. Sunni Ali ascended the throne of Songhay in 1464, and until his death in 1492 he never lost a battle. He is still a great hero in West Africa.

The second section of the reading deals with the reign of

* From *A Glorious Age in Africa*, by Daniel Chu and Elliott Skinner. Copyright © 1965 by Doubleday & Company, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Askia Muhammad, or Askia the Great, as he is often called, who ruled from 1493 to 1528. During this period he greatly expanded the Songhay empire, making it eventually the largest of the three kingdoms, about two thirds the size of the United States.

As you read this selection by Daniel Chu, a writer and editor, and Elliott Skinner, a professor of anthropology, think of these questions:

What steps did Askia Muhammad take to unify the empire?

How did the social system of Songhay reflect its economic developing?]

The chain of conquests which forged a great Songhay Empire began with the capture of Timbuktu around the year 1468. Perhaps the word "recapture" should be used. Timbuktu was probably founded by the people of the Niger, and it was traditionally regarded as a Songhay city. On the Great Bend of the Niger River, it was a place where the people of the river came to trade with the nomads of the desert.

During the years of the empire of Mali, Timbuktu was already a center of commerce and one of the major centers of learning in all of Africa. It is no wonder that it was a prized possession of Mali. It had a great university, Sankore, which attracted many students from distant parts of Africa. Scholarship and commerce were the glories of Timbuktu.

Timbuktu was a crowded and fairly drab-looking town. Except for a mosque and a palace (built for Mansa Musa by Es-Saheli, the poet-architect), the town was said to be little more than "a mass of ill-looking houses, built of mud-bricks."

Mali's hold on Timbuktu weakened after the death of Mansa Musa. Around 1433 the city was invaded by Tuareg nomads from the desert. Their leader was a chief named Akil.

Though Timbuktu was his, Chief Akil chose not to live there. Instead he remained in the desert and appointed a man named Ammar to represent him in Timbuktu. One of Ammar's duties was to collect taxes. He kept one-third of the money himself and turned two-thirds over to Chief Akil.

When Ammar heard of the growing strength of the Sunni rulers of Songhay, he unwisely sent a letter to Sunni Ali Ber in Gao and boasted that Timbuktu could repulse any attack. Later he was sorry about this letter.

* * *

. . . Sunni Ali Ber was not going to let an opportunity like this slip by. He ordered his army to march at once on Timbuktu. Sunni Ali Ber himself rode at the head of his cavalry.

The Songhay army moved along the bank of the Niger. When they reached a city which was a "suburb" of Timbuktu, they were seen by Chief Alik and Ammar, who were watching from a hilltop.

The sight of the huge army from Songhay so unnerved Akil that he decided to flee. Many of the Sankore teachers also left as soon as they could. The Sankore scholars had loudly scorned the people of Songhay as something on the level of uncouth savages. Now that the Songhay army was on Timbuktu's shores, the timid scholars were not going to test the anger of the people whom they had insulted. . . .

The Songhay army plundered Timbuktu and slew hundreds of its citizens. Sunni Ali was especially cruel to those accused of having traded with the Tuaregs. For Sunni Ali

considered the Tuaregs his bitterest enemies. This was the result of decades of Tuareg-Songhay rivalry for control of the middle Niger.

In a famous history of the Sudan, the historian Es-Sadi described Sunni Ali as a "master tyrant" and "scoundrel." Like many other Moslem writers, Es-Sadi could never forgive Sunni Ali for his cruel and humiliating treatment of the Moslem scholars of Timbuktu, especially since the Songhay king was supposed to be a Moslem himself. Almost without exception, Moslem historians tended to heap scorn on Sunni Ali.

Yet there was no doubt that Sunni Ali was revered by his own people. They called him "the most high," implying that he was like a god. His ability on the battlefield humbled those who stood against him. Because he was headstrong, he was often unpredictable. If he was cruel, he was also generous. Above all else, Sunni Ali was an able ruler with a real talent for organization and government.

THE NEW DYNASTY

. . . Askia Muhammad is remembered for his great achievements in unifying a huge area of land. Whereas the empire of Sunni Ali Ber remained largely a confederation of individual states, all paying allegiance to the Songhay emperor, the Askia took central government in the western Sudan yet another step.

He appointed governors to each of his provinces. In addition he organized a central government of ministers directly responsible to the king. This ministry included a treasurer, the chief of the navy (of the Songhay canoe fleet), chief tax

collector, and chiefs of forests, woodcutters, and fishermen. Each town or large village was governed by a person appointed by the king.

To strengthen the Moslem faith throughout his empire, the Askia appointed Islamic judges to every large district to administer Moslem justice in place of traditional laws.

This sixteenth-century bronze plaque from Benin illustrates the regal qualities of West African kingdoms. The figures standing on either side of the king are not children but the king's attendants. Because they are less important personages, they are represented as smaller than the king.

His own court became the highest court and it heard appeals from the lower courts.

By this time Songhay had become a huge empire characterized by order and prosperity. The vigor of commercial and scholarly activities in the empire served as a tribute to the skill and wisdom of Askia the Great.

SONGHAY'S SOCIAL SYSTEM

The social system in Songhay had many aspects of a caste system; that is, a person's social and economic standing depended largely on what group or tribe he belonged to. If he belonged to a particular group, it often determined what sort of work he did and with whom he associated.

There were special castes whose members specialized in caring for horses. Another caste did most of the smithing, particularly the job of making spears and arrows for the Songhay army. In the lake districts west of Timbuktu, there was a caste of fishermen who transported people and goods at the command of the ruler. Members of other castes and tribes attended to the personal needs of the king, his family and his court.

At the top of the social and political ladder were the descendants of the original Songhay people of Kukya. They enjoyed special privileges and were kept apart from the general population. They were not allowed to marry outside of their own caste.

Next in line were the freemen and traders of the cities and town, and the members of the army, composed of noble cavalrymen, and foot soldiers. A large portion of the infantry was made up of war prisoners.

The Songhay army represented something of an innovation for the western Sudan. Up to this time Sudanese armies had been raised by giving each province a quota for providing a certain number of soldiers. Any male citizen of the empire who was healthy could be drafted into military service. If this citizen happened to be a farmer, his fields would be left to the weeds while he was away.

The Songhay empire eliminated the waste caused by drafting people with civilian occupations. They organized a completely professional army. Members of the Songhay army were expected to fight the wars of the empire, and that was all. In Sunni Ali's time, that was enough to keep them busy all the time.

The Songhay army lived in barracks and camps separated from the civilian population. The mounted soldiers (those who rode horses or camels) were armed with sabres and lances and wore breastplates padded with cotton, for protection. The foot soldiers fought with long, pointed staves and with bow and poison-tipped arrows.

At the bottom of the social scale in Songhay were the war captives and slaves who were not placed in the army but put to work on the farms. Some of the "farms" were rather like labor camps.

Ethiopia and East Africa

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: Early development in Africa was not limited to the Western Sudan. East Africa also produced great kingdoms, and it maintained a thriving trade with areas as far away as China.

Perhaps the oldest African kingdom—and certainly the most enduring Christian empire in the world—is Ethiopia. It traces its origin to a series of city-states that developed as early as 1000 B.C. The kingdom of Ethiopia, then, can claim a continuity of almost three thousand years. It is one of the two African states (with Liberia) that escaped colonial rule, and the lineage of the present Emperor, Haile Selassie, goes back to biblical times.

Other areas of East Africa also developed early. South of Ethiopia, along the coast of present-day Kenya and Tanzania, trading centers flourished more than two thousand years ago. As early as 800 A.D. the East Coast had contact with India, China, and the countries of the Persian Gulf. One of the most famous cities of that time was Kilwa, which still can be found on the map of Tanzania. Traveling through East Africa in 1331, Ibn Battuta describes Kilwa as "one of the most beautiful and well-constructed towns in the world."

The first selection that follows deals with the history of ancient Ethiopia. It was written by Margaret Morgan, a staff

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member of the Educational Materials Project. The next selection, "East African Glory," comes from Basil Davidson's book *A Guide to African History*. It describes the early development of the East African coast.

As you read these selections, think of these questions:

What are the factors that led to the development of Askum (Ethiopia)?

What evidence do we have of early trade relations between East Africa and Asia?]

ETHIOPIA: AN ANCIENT KINGDOM SURVIVES*

Long before Christ, when northern Europeans were still fighting petty tribal wars and had not even thought of building cities, Ethiopia was one of the great powers of the world. The ancient Ethiopian city-state called Aksum was an African rival to the famous classical states of the Mediterranean: Athens, Sparta, and Rome.

Even before the founding of Aksum, as early as 2500 B.C., the coastlands of the horn of Africa were involved in extensive trade. From this area—which the ancient Egyptians called the Land of Punt, or God's land—came ivory, ebony, gold, panther skins, cinnamon, cosmetics, frankincense, and myrrh. Since cinnamon originally came from India, it is clear that the Land of Punt had already established commercial ties with the East.

The origins of Aksum—like the traditional histories of all

* By Margaret Morgan.

ancient kingdoms—are embedded in a mythical story. According to *The Glory of Kings,* Ethiopia's official history, the emperors of Ethiopia are descended from the biblical Queen of Sheba. This famous queen is held to have been the ruler of Ethiopia during the reign of King Solomon of Israel and Judah (974-932 B.C.). The Queen of Sheba is said to have visited Solomon "with a very great train, with camels that bear spices, and very much gold and precious stones." She bore Solomon a son, Menelik I, who, according to legend, ruled Ethiopia and founded the line of the "Lion of Judah." Haile Selassie, the present Emperor of Ethiopia, still claims the title "King of the Kings, Conquering Lion of Judah, Elect of God."

Traditionally Ethiopia was divided into a number of semi-independent kingdoms, each with its own ruler. At the head of these separate kingdoms reigned the "strong man" or "King of the Kings," who represented the most powerful region at the time.

The story of Solomon and Sheba shows that Ethiopian kings have long considered themselves, and consequently have been considered by others, to be an essential part of ancient history. They believe themselves to be descendants of the "chosen people," a term referring to the tribe of Israelites, who considered their people to be the "Elect of God."

Because of its central location, the Land of Punt was able to establish itself as a commercial center very early in the history of the world. Ethiopia, therefore, had contacts with Egypt, Greece, Rome, India, and the Middle East. It has been the center of the development of the world's great religions and has been influenced by them all. As early as 1000 B.C., groups of Sabeans from South Arabia settled

along the coast and in the highlands of what is today northern Ethiopia.

Because the Sabeans were Semites, some scholars claim that Ethiopians are not Africans but Semites, related to the ancient Israelites. They cite as evidence the fact that a sizable Jewish community still exists in Ethiopia, and that the Emperor calls himself Lion of Judah, Elect of God.

But the truth is that Ethiopians—even the Falashas, or black Jews—are very much Africans. The glorious empire of Aksum developed a very distinctive civilization, with its own language, script, and remarkable architecture. Aksum's court structure, as well as its methods of terrace farming, was similar to features found throughout East African ruins. The Ethiopian kingship is also typical of African sacred kingships, and the lion is a common African royal insignia. Thus Aksum was a uniquely African empire that incorporated much from the outside and yet developed a distinctive culture of its own.

Aksum is especially significant in the study of African history because it is one of the few African states that developed its own written language. Because of this, historians have been provided with documents that date back at least two thousand years. From these documents we have learned of the advanced form of agriculture practiced by the early Ethiopians; of the flourishing trade with Egypt, the Middle East, India, China, and Rome; and of the great accomplishments and riches of the Ethiopian emperors.

There are also archaeological evidences of Aksum's greatness. The Aksumites constructed numerous towns and trading stations connected by a paved highway from the coast. The towns and cities of Aksum had paved streets for the horses and chariots of the rich. The palaces of the nobility were

impressive constructions of stone. Archaeologists have found the ruins of these buildings, as well as the stone relics of mighty temples erected to the gods and the remains of colossal monuments built in the gods' honor. The monuments, called *stelae*, are pillars carved from a single piece of stone. One of those still standing is nearly 70 feet tall, intricately carved so as to represent the doors and windows of what today would be called a skyscraper.

Archaeologists digging in the vicinity of ancient Aksum have also uncovered numerous coins obviously minted by Aksumites over a period of several hundred years, before and after the birth of Christ. Many of these coins, made of gold, silver, and bronze, are inscribed in both Geez (the ancient Ethiopian language) and Greek, indicating the widespread trade that existed between Aksum and Greece.

In approximately 330 A.D. Aksum became one of the first ancient kingdoms to accept Christianity as its national religion. And Ethiopia remains Christian today, making it the longest enduring Christian empire. This new religion gave added strength and unity to the empire. It provided a common philosophy which brought the people from the separate Ethiopian kingdoms together, making it possible for the empire to defend itself against outside invasions.

However, during the eighth century, Aksum was greatly weakened by a civil war, making it possible for the Muslims to expand their trade and influence in the area. Although Aksum put up strong resistance, the Muslims were able to capture Ethiopia's coastline and cut off Aksum's access to the Red Sea. With the Islamic faith thus implanted along the coast to the east and throughout Egypt to the north, Ethiopia found communication with the Christian world very difficult. This semi-isolation continued for approximately eight hun-

dred years, from the eighth century to the sixteenth century.

Ethiopian civilization, however, continued to develop. Since it was virtually cut off from trade, the mountainous kingdom turned to agriculture as a source of wealth. Like Europe at the time, Ethiopia lost its long-standing ties with the East and became a feudal kingdom.

Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia for the past forty years, carries on a tradition reaching back thirty centuries. The gold lions on the Emperor's desk are traditional African symbols of authority.

This feudal empire developed in isolation from the rest of the world until the fifteenth century. During the years of isolation, the impressive rock-hewn churches, which are now among the wonders of the world, were built. The most famous of these are named after King Lalibela because they were constructed during his reign, in the thirteenth century. They are carved from huge stone blocks, hollowed out with perfectly square corners and intricate designs. The Lalibela churches are still in use today, and their site has become known as the Jerusalem of Ethiopia. Pilgrims still travel great distances to worship there.

During its isolation, Ethiopia became a land of wealthy nobility, intricate religious ceremonies, and elaborate court rituals. When the Portuguese rediscovered Ethiopia in the fifteenth century, they found it to be a rich and impressive feudal kingdom much like their own. They had been searching for Ethiopia for three hundred years in their quest for the legendary Prester John, who supposedly ruled over a Christian kingdom in the heart of Africa. When they found Christian Ethiopia, they believed it to be this legendary land, and its splendor matched their expectations.

In 1896, when the rest of Africa was conquered by European colonialists, Ethiopia, because of its strong and well-established army, was able to defeat the Italians in the famous battle of Adowa. Thus Ethiopia became the only state in Africa other than Liberia to escape colonial rule.

Today Ethiopia's feudal tradition remains unchanged. Like Europe in the Middle Ages, Ethiopia still has its equivalent of knights and lords, princes, serfs, and royal courts, and a church structure similar to the Eastern rite of the Catholic Church. As we have noted, Haile Selassie, the present emperor of Ethiopia, still claims the impressive ar-

chaic title "King of the Kings" and all the ceremonies of the ancient Aksum court remain intact. Ethiopia's people are still peasants tied to the land as they have been for centuries while the aristocracy and the Church still own the land. But

An early Ethiopian painting, executed in traditional style, shows a court feast, with the emperor (upper left) holding the highest position. The kingdom of Ethiopia can claim an unbroken continuity of almost three thousand years.

the greatness of Ethiopia's past continues to live in Ethiopia today and will certainly help to shape the Ethiopia of the future.

EAST AFRICAN GLORY*

In the year 1331 an educated man from the city of Fez in Morocco traveled down the long east coast of Africa. His name was Ibn Battuta. Along the coast of East Africa he found peace and wellbeing. He passed through many important trading cities and some smaller towns. He was made welcome by rulers and businessmen and teachers. But the famous city of Kilwa pleased him more than any other. "Kilwa," he wrote, "is one of the most beautiful and well-constructed towns in the world."

Today only a shabby village stands there. Yet beyond the village can still be found the walls and towers of ruined palaces and large houses and mosques, which is what Moslems call their churches. A great palace has been dug out of the bushes that covered it for hundreds of years. It is a strange and beautiful ruin on a cliff over the Indian Ocean. Many other ruins stand nearby. But the strangest thing about Kilwa and the towns nearby is that there is little to be found about them in the new history books. Even when the cities are described, they are said to be not African, but the work of people from Arabia or Persia.

* From *A Guide to African History* by Basil Davidson, pp. 29-35. Copyright © 1965 by Doubleday & Company, Inc. Copyright © 1963 by George Allen & Unwin Ltd. Reprinted by permission of Doubleday & Company, Inc.

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History books that say this are out of date, and they are wrong. People who have studied these cities on the east coast say that the cities were an important part of Africa's life between the years 1000 and 1700. And these cities were African, or, to be more exact, Swahili. This is the name of the people of the coast of Kenya and Tanganyika and the island of Zanzibar. [In 1964 Tanganyika and Zanzibar joined to form the republic of Tanzania.]

The story of these great cities goes far, far back in time. More than 2,000 years ago, at the beginning of the Iron Age in central-southern Africa, small trading villages grew up along this coast. They were marketplaces for the goods traded between East Africa and other countries along the Indian Ocean, especially Arabia. In these trading villages the sailors and traders did business and visited with African friends and families, stayed and lived with them, married and made their own homes. These facts are found in an Egyptian-Greek guidebook on trading and sailing in the east coast waters. The guide was probably written in the first century A.D., which is the time right after the birth of Christ.

About 1,200 years ago, many people from southern Arabia moved to the islands along the east coast of Africa. They brought their Moslem religion with them. Soon they married and made homes among the people of the coast.

At the same time, trade increased all around the Indian Ocean. There were busy seaports all the way from southern China to Kilwa and the nearby cities. Things made in China began to reach Kilwa. East African ivory began to reach China. Trading also went on with India and the countries of the Persian Gulf and Arabia.

Then African people far inland from the Indian Ocean began to offer gold for the things they needed from other

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The broken vaults shown at left are part of the Great Mosque of Kilwa, built in the twelfth and fifteenth centuries by the sultans who controlled this ancient East African trading center, whose location is shown in the map above.

countries, the most important of which was cotton for clothing. The cities of the coast took the gold and sold it to other countries. Gold became more important than ivory for trading, though ivory was still in demand. Southeast Africa became as famous for its gold, among the countries of the East, as Ghana was among the countries of the West.

Gold from Mozambique and Southern Rhodesia, as we now call those countries, began to leave the seaports of East

Africa in the tenth century. A few hundred years later the traders of Kilwa had charge of this gold trade. They became very rich. They made all traders from other countries pay heavy taxes on what was sold and bought. Kilwa grew and became a clean and comfortable city.

There were many other big trading cities—big enough to be called city-states or even city-empires because they controlled large areas. There were also many smaller ones. Their rulers were in touch with many large countries of the Far East. Around the year 1400, for example, one African city sent a giraffe to the emperor of China. We know this happened because there is a Chinese painting of this giraffe, and the painting has words on it which tell the story of the gift. A few years later the Chinese emperor sent back gifts with a friendly fleet of many ships and thousands of sailors.

The trading that went on across the Indian Ocean was the work of many different peoples. The Swahili were the people on the African side. They were very important in Africa's history. There were Swahili poets who wrote in the Arabic language and in their native language. Storytellers sang of the adventures of famous men. Traders brought fine pots and jars from China and India and Persia and displayed them so that their friends and customers could enjoy seeing them.

Then trouble came to these trading cities. In 1497, Vasco da Gama, a famous sailor from Portugal, sailed around the Cape of Good Hope, which is at the southern end of Africa. Other Portuguese captains who followed Vasco da Gama attacked and robbed city after city. They destroyed the Indian Ocean trade.

The cities on the southeastern coast, especially Kilwa, never really got over this time of pirate raids. The cities of the northern coast came through better. The pirates did not

attack them as violently, and in time they were able to grow again.

Later—in the 1700's—the language of the Swahili began to be widely written. Men wrote about the events of their own day. They also wrote about the glories of the past. They were not, we may remember, the only people in Africa writing in their own language. Far across on the other side of Africa, the educated people of the western Sudan were doing the same. If most African people did not know how to write —and, living in close tribal groups, they had no need for writing—it is still important to remember those people who did know how to write and who, like the Swahili people, used this knowledge well.

*Booty for the King: The First Captives**

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: As we saw in the last selection, the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1497, opening the east coast of Africa to European pillage and exploration. More than fifty years earlier, Portuguese explorers were sailing down the west coast in search of trade, adventure, and Christian converts. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to explore Africa, and they will be the last to give up the fruits of their exploration. They still hold the large African colonies of Angola, Portuguese Guinea, and Mozambique.

In 1441 the Portuguese carried their first slaves aboard ships for sale in European markets. This did not mark the beginning of slavery in Africa—slaves had been traded within the continent for five hundred years before the coming of the Portuguese—but it did mark the beginning of modern slavery, and there is a big difference. Local African slavery, compared to what the Europeans practiced, was quite humane and perhaps should not even be called slavery. When captives were taken in war, they were often made "slaves" and even traded to other people, but these "slaves" more often than not were allowed to earn money, own land, and intermarry with the local population. They

* Adapted from Gomes Eannes de Azurara, *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea, 1441–1448* (first published in Portuguese in 1841), Chap. 36.

also developed skills, such as boat-building, that made them important and therefore accepted members of society. This type of integration never took place under European and American slavery.

The selection you are about to read tells of a Portuguese slaving raid in the year 1446. By this time, Portuguese ships had travelled as far south as Cape Blanco (on the northern tip of the Mauritania coast), only a few days' sail from Portugal. They were primarily interested in the adventure of pushing farther and farther south, looking for the land of Prester John and hoping to get rich from African gold and ivory and Asian spices. Even the captives they took were held more for the ransom they would bring than for the labor they would produce. But the European practice of taking slaves started here.

This selection is based on a Portuguese document of 1453. It gives a first-hand account of what happened during and after the slave raid.

As you read the selection, think of these questions:

Why did Captain Goncalvez want to take captives?

Why did the results of the raid lead to more raids?]

"Let us return," said Antam Goncalvez, "to Cape Blanco, for I have heard that there is a village where we could find some people of whom we could make booty, if we took them suddenly and by surprise."

Everyone agreed that this was a good idea and should be put into action at once. Thirty-eight men were chosen for this service, and they landed and went to the village immediately, at nightfall, but found no one in it. Then some of them said: "We should return to our boats and row as far as

possible along the coast until we see morning. Then we should land and move back up the coast to the Cape. There we can wait for the Moors [black Africans, so called because the Moors of southern Portugal were black]. As they have with them women and children, they will be forced to rest part of the night, and though they travel continually, they cannot go so fast as to prevent us from passing them. If we hold the Cape we will meet them, for they must go along the Cape before they can retreat into the upland."

All agreed to this plan, and they rowed all the night without taking any rest. When the clearness of the day was beginning, twenty-eight of them landed, leaving the others behind to guard the boats. The landing party moved on until they arrived at a certain high place, from which they could keep a good watch over all the parts around them. Concealing themselves as well as they could in the sunlight, they saw the Moors coming toward them—men and women, with their boys and girls—seventy or eighty in all.

Without further discussion, they rushed toward them, shouting out their accustomed cries, "St. George," "Portugal." The Moors were so surprised that they ran in confusion. Only seven or eight stood on their defense, of whom three or four fell dead at the first charge. The others were taken prisoners, thus ending the fight. Our men were now free to pursue the Moors who had run. And they did not rest in their pursuit, for such a time of toil is truly exciting for conquerors. So they captured in all fifty-five, whom they took with them to the boats. Of their joy I will not speak, because reason will tell you what it must have been, both of those who took the captives and of the others on board the ships, when they came with their prize. And after this capture they agreed to turn back to the kingdom. . . .

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Wherefore they guided their ships toward Portugal, making straight for Lisbon, where they arrived quite content with their booty. Who would not take pleasure at seeing the multitude of people that ran out to see those ships? As soon as the sails were lowered, officers from shore who collect the royal dues rowed to the ships to see what they brought. When they returned to shore with the news, word passed quickly from one to another, until after a short time there was such a multitude in the ships that they were nearly swamped.

Nor was there less excitement the next day when they took the captives out of the ships and conveyed them to the palace of the Prince. From all over the city, people flocked to the streets where they passed. Even those who had at first complained about such action [the bringing of captives from Africa] were now part of the cheering crowd.

And the noise of the people was so great, praising the great virtues of the Prince (when they saw them take the captives in bonds along those streets), that if anyone had dared to speak against this action he would find it well to change his mind. Nor was there any point in criticizing the action, for the populace rarely (and least of all in a time of excitement) pardons a man who contradicts the established view. Nor doth it appear to me that there could be a man of such evil condition that he could speak against so obvious a good, from which followed such great profits.

The Prince was then away from Lisbon, but he sent to receive his fifth of the captives. For the other four-fifths, the captains made a sale in the city, from which all received great rewards.

Onward, Christian Soldiers *

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: By 1485 the Portuguese had sailed as far south as the Congo River, on the West African coast. They had also set up trading forts along the way, the first one as early as 1448. Permanent settlement, as well as exploration, was very much a part of the Portuguese plan.

Besides their commercial interests, however, the Portuguese had another important mission: saving souls. Prince Henry of Portugal, the man behind these explorations, was a devout Catholic, and he pictured his sailors and missionaries as Christian crusaders bringing the word of God to the African heathens. He even sought and received the support of the Pope in these activities.

This selection, based on fifteenth-century Portuguese chronicles, explains how Diogo Cam, a Portuguese captain, discovered the Congo River in 1485. It also describes the methods used to convert the Africans to Christianity.

Notice that Africans and Europeans here treat each other as equals. This mutual respect was common during the early period of contact, particularly when the Europeans found well-developed societies, as they did in the Congo.

* Adapted from the Portuguese Royal Chronicles of 1485, as translated by John Leyden and Hugh Murray, *Historical Account of Discoveries and Travels in Africa*, Vol. I, Edinburgh, Archibald Constable & Co., 1817, pp. 64-75.

As you read this selection, think of these questions:

What evidence can you find of African intelligence and self-confidence?

How "godly" do you consider the actions of the Portuguese?]

When Diogo Cam neared the coast, he noticed a strong current from the land. Moreover, the water was discolored, and when tasted, proved to be fresh. This decidedly suggested that they were near the mouth of some mighty river, an opinion soon confirmed by a nearer approach. This river he called the Congo, after the kingdom through which it flowed. . . . The first step which our navigator took was to plant his pillar on the opposite side of the river. . . . Believing that the banks of so mighty a stream were likely to be fertile and well peopled, he decided to climb it.

The shores proved to be filled with people exceedingly black and speaking a language which, though Diogo knew those spoken on other parts of the coast, was wholly beyond his understanding. He therefore employed sign language and learned that, at a certain number of days' journey up the country, there resided a very powerful monarch, king of the whole region. Diogo decided to send some of his men with presents for this prince, on the condition that the guides would bring them back in safety within a certain time.

The agreed-upon period passed without any appearance of their return. But since the natives had been well received and given little presents, they came on board the ships as if they were old friends of the Portuguese. In this state of affairs, Diogo decided on his course of action.

At a moment when several of the principal natives were on board, he suddenly weighed anchor and sailed for Portugal. He then indicated by signs to the people on shore that he carried away their countrymen merely to fulfill his king's desire of seeing and conversing with them; that he would return in the space of fifteen moons; and that, in the meantime, he left, as a security in their hands, those of his countrymen who had gone as ambassadors to their king. In fact, his grand object in this scheme appears to have been to carry home these living trophies of his discovery; and he hoped, by teaching them the Portuguese language while those left behind should acquire that of Congo, that a regular channel of communication might be opened.

The king of Portugal, on the arrival of this party, felt the joy his commander expected. Because of the language instruction the Africans had received on the passage, they were able to converse with some degree of fluency, and pleased the king greatly by their intelligent answers. . . . As the end of the appointed period approached, Diogo again set sail, in order to fulfill his promise. On arriving at the bar of the river of Congo, great was his joy to discover his countrymen whom he had left as hostages, and who had been treated in the very best manner during his absence. He now . . . visited the king, who was so pleased by the treatment his subjects had experienced, and by the whole conduct of the Portuguese, that he knew not how to load him with sufficient honors.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

In the course of the conversations which this commander held, the Holy Spirit is said to have begun to operate, so

that the monarch not only became himself a convert to Christianity but took measures for the general conversion of his subjects. He proposed both that priests should be sent from Europe and that several young men of rank in his country should go over to be baptized and instructed . . . so they could spread religious knowledge among their countrymen. The king sent along with them a present of ivory, and of cloth made from the palm tree. . . .

These persons were received in Portugal with great honors. They were speedily instructed and baptized, the king standing godfather to the ambassador, while each of his lords served as godfather to the others. . . .

After the chief of Congo had thus spent two years in Europe, the king of Portugal, in the year 1490, fitted out a new armament of three vessels to carry them back to their native country.

As soon as the nephew of the king, Prince Mani Sono, learned of the arival of the Portuguese, he hurried to meet them, accompanied by a numerous train of his followers and by a great sound of horns, kettledrums, and all the instruments the country afforded. He then stated that his instructions were to conduct them immediately to the king, but insisted that first he himself should be immediately baptized, as being at an age so advanced that he might otherwise not survive to have the ceremony performed. . . .

Meanwhile, the mission that had been sent to the king to announce their arrival returned with an invitation to go to Ambassi, the city at which that monarch resided. The party set out, accompanied by more than 200 Negroes, carrying on their heads all the baggage, as well as whatever would be required for the service of the altar. They were met halfway by a large delegation appointed to welcome them; but, at

the distance of two leagues from the capital, a cavalcade appeared, on a much greater scale than any former one. They came in three lines, armed after the manner of the country, and with a extraordinary noise of barbarous instruments, performing in such an order as to remind the Portuguese of the processions for invocation and prayers for the saints.

From time to time, the whole body raised a shout so tremendous that it seemed to tear apart the skies. The songs were always in praise of the king of Portugal, on account of what he was now sending to their king. The troops of Congo then wheeled round, and the Portuguese, being placed in the center, marched to the spot where the king was preparing to give them an audience. It was a large park so covered with people that they could hardly get through the crowd.

When the Portuguese explorer Diogo Cam reached the Congo in 1485, he left this inscription to record the date and the circumstances of his discovery. The young African tracing the inscription shows the relative size.

KING HOLDS COURT

The king was stationed on a wooden stage of timber, so high that he could be seen by the whole assembly. He sat in a chair of ivory, ornamented with some pieces of well-carved wood. His dress consisted of skins of beasts, which are praised as glossy, and blacker than his own skin; the lower part of his body was covered with a damask robe, presented to him by Diogo Cam; on his left arm he wore a bracelet of brass, and on his shoulder a horse's tail, a sign of royalty. His head was covered with a bonnet of very fine cloth made from the palm tree . . . resembling the texture of our velvet satin.

Ruy de Sousa then did curtsy after the European manner, which the king returned in his own, by placing his hand on the ground and making a semblance of taking up dust, then pressing it to the breast of the ambassador, and afterwards to his own. He then expressed a desire to see the holy things which they had brought along with them, which being taken out and exhibited one by one were viewed with the utmost attention and reverence by the whole assembly. In this manner they spent the day and part of the night, until the Europeans were shown to the place appointed for their residence.

Next day Ruy de Sousa requested that a church should be immediately built; a task to which the king applied himself most eagerly. Since there was no stone in the neighborhood, it was sent for from a great distance; and every individual was obliged to labor so that the work might be finished with the greater speed. Hence, though the Portuguese arrived only upon the 29th of April, the first stone was laid on the 3rd of May, and the whole was completed on the 1st of June.

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. . . On the same day that the foundation of the church was laid, the king was baptized with all his nobles and 100,000 of his subjects.

Nothing, it appears, could thus be more promising than the original establishment of the Catholic faith in Congo. After the first ceremonies had passed, however, the missionaries thought . . . they should tell the king that, as a part of his new religion, he must dismiss the numerous wives whom he now maintained and confine himself to one. This restriction appeared so intolerable to the aged monarch that, rather than submit to it, he renounced Christianity and returned, with all his nobles, to the practice of paganism. The ladies in particular are said to have taken a most active part in opposing such . . . a change.

DOM AFFONSO CONVERTED

Amid this general change of heart, the only person who remained Christian was the king's eldest son, called by the Portuguese Dom Affonso; and who, it appears, willingly submitted to the restriction that his father judged so unbearable. Disagreement thus arose between the father and son, which was supported by Panso Aquitimo, another brother, who had from the first shown himself an enemy to the new faith. He and his . . . followers studiously collected every report that could turn the mind of the king against his heir-apparent, Dom Affonso.

They assured him that, by the power of *Fetiches,* taught him by the Christians, Affonso came every night from his residence at Cabo de Reyno, 80 leagues distant, carried away one of the king's wives, and brought her back in the morning.

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They added that, by the same power, he dried up the rivers and injured the fruits of the earth, so that the king's territories might not yield their usual profits. These atrocities moved the monarch to such anger that he withdrew the income that had been set aside for the Prince and even took measures against his life. . . .

The king died, however, before the issue was settled. Panso Aquitimo then took advantage of being on the spot and seized the vacant throne without regard to the rights of his elder brother. Affonso, on finding this out, went to a post near the capital, where he was able to collect only 36 Christians; while the cries of his brother's troops, heard from a great distance, announced the numerous army by whom he was supported. Affonso, however, we are assured, sent strict orders to his followers by no means to come to his aid, as he placed his sole reliance on the aid of heaven and wished nothing to lessen the splendor of the miracle which was to take place in his favor.

Accordingly, in a few days he and his brother came to action. Affonso began by invoking the aid of the apostle Saint James. Saint James appeared in the clouds, bearing the sign of the cross and attended by "a numerous cavalry of angels," at sight of whom the unbelieving army fled with such haste that their chiefs were left in the rear, unable to save themselves. Panso Aquitimo, being caught in the den of a wild beast, was taken, and died soon after. His principal commander was also taken; but as he was about to be executed, he professed himself convinced of his error and begged that, before death, he might receive the sacrament of baptism so that, whatever became of his body, his soul might be saved. This request appeared so noble to Dom Affonso that he granted him a full pardon, on the sole condition that he

and his descendants should sweep and wash the church and should draw water for the baptism of the infidels.

In regard to the battle in question, those who are not blessed with the measure of faith enjoyed by the Catholic historians will doubtless suspect that the victory was due mainly to the superior arms and discipline of the Portuguese. However, it is certain that the districts situated to the south of the Congo continued, during more than two centuries, to profess a . . . type of Christianity; and the Church of Rome . . . sent successive bodies of missionaries who not only taught its doctrines but sometimes exercised an authority almost . . . greater than the king's.

*Which Side Are You On?**

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: As we saw in the last selection, Dom Affonso was converted to Christianity and, with the power of Portugal behind him, became king of the Congo.

That was in the year 1490. At the time Affonso trusted the Portuguese. He thought they were men of good will, godly men, in fact, who were primarily interested in spreading the gospel and perhaps carrying on some trade. He had no idea of their real intentions.

By 1526, however, Affonso had become painfully aware of the negative aspects of the Congo-Portugal "partnership." He still trusted the Portuguese—at least he held out hope that they meant well—but he could see that more evil than good was resulting from the trade with the Europeans.

This selection consists of three letters written in 1526 by Dom Affonso to the King of Portugal, Dom João.

As you read, think of these questions:

What are Dom Affonso's complaints?

How noble are the intentions of the Portuguese?]

* These extracts are translated from the original texts in Visconde de Paiva-Manso, *Historia do Congo* (*Documentos*) (Lisbon: 1877), which has 22 of King Affonso's letters, the other two that are known being in A. de A. Felner, *Angola* (Coimbra: 1933). As translated by Basil Davidson, *The African Past*, Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1964, pp. 191-94. Copyright © 1964 by Basil Davidson. Used by permission of Atlantic-Little, Brown & Co. and the Longman Group Ltd.

EVILS OF THE TRADE

[1526] Sir, Your Highness [of Portugal] should know how our Kingdom is being lost in so many ways . . . since this is caused by the excessive freedom given by your factors [traders] and officials to the men and merchants who are allowed to come to this Kingdom to set up shops with goods and many things which have been prohibited by us . . . that many of our vassals [subjects], whom we had in obedience, do not comply because they have the things in greater abundance than we ourselves; and it was with these things that we had them content and subjected under our vassalage and jurisdiction, so it is doing a great harm not only to the service of God, but to the security and peace of our Kingdoms and State as well.

And we cannot reckon how great the damage is, since the mentioned merchants are taking every day our natives, sons of the land and the sons of our noblemen and vassals and our relatives, because the thieves and men of bad conscience grab them wishing to have the things and wares of this Kingdom which they are ambitious of; they grab them and get them to be sold; and so great, Sir, is the corruption and licentiousness that our country is being completely depopulated, and Your Highness should not agree with this nor accept it as in your service. And to avoid it we need from those [your] Kingdoms no more than some priests and a few people to teach in schools, and no other goods except wine and flour for the holy sacrement. That is why we beg of Your Highness to help and assist us in this matter, commanding your factors that they should not send here either merchants or wares, because it is *our will that in these Kingdoms*

The intricate carving of this sixth-century clay pouring vessel from the Congo indicates the sophistication of the civilization that greeted Diogo Cam and other early European explorers.

*there should not be any trade of slaves nor outlet for them.** Concerning what is referred [to] above, again we beg of Your Highness to agree with it, since otherwise we cannot remedy such an obvious damage. Pray Our Lord in His mercy to have Your Highness under His guard and let you do forever the things of His service. I kiss your hands many times.

At our town of Congo, written on the sixth day of July. . . .

* Emphasis in the original.

THE ORIGINS OF SLAVING

[1526] Moreover, Sir, in our Kingdoms there is another great inconvenience which is of little service to God, and this is that many of our people, keenly desirous as they are of the wares and things of your Kingdoms, which are brought here by your people, and in order to satisfy their voracious appetite, seize many of our people, freed and exempt men; and very often it happens that they kidnap even noblemen and the sons of noblemen, and our relatives, and take them to be sold to the white men who are in our Kingdoms; and for this purpose they have concealed them; and others are brought during the night so that they might not be recognized.

And as soon as they are taken by the white men they are immediately ironed and branded with fire, and when they are carried to be embarked, if they are caught by our guards' men the whites allege that they have bought them but they cannot say from whom, so that it is our duty to do justice and to restore to the freemen their freedom, but it cannot be done if your subjects feel offended, as they claim to be.

And to avoid such a great evil we passed a law so that any white man living in our Kingdoms and wanting to purchase goods in any way should first inform three of our noblemen and officials of our court whom we rely upon in this matter, and these are Dom Pedro Manipanza and Dom Manuel Manissaba, our chief usher, and Gonçalo Pires, our chief freighter, who should investigate if the mentioned goods are captives or free men, and if cleared by them there will be no further doubt nor embargo for them to be taken

and embarked. But if the white men do not comply with it they will lose the aforementioned goods. . . .

A CALL FOR AID

[1526] Sir, Your Highness has been kind enough to write to us saying that we should ask in our letters for anything we need, and that we shall be provided with everything, and as the peace and the health of our Kingdom depend on us, and as there are among us old folks and people who have lived for many days, it happens that we have continuously many and different diseases which put us very often in such a weakness that we reach almost the last extreme; and the same happens to our children, relatives, and natives owing to the lack in this country of physicians and surgeons who might know how to cure properly such diseases. And as we have got neither dispensaries nor drugs which might help us in this forlornness, many of those who had been already confirmed and instructed in the holy faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ perish and die; and the rest of the people in their majority cure themselves with herbs and breads and other ancient methods, so that they put all their faith in the mentioned herbs and ceremonies if they live, and believe that they are saved if they die; and this is not much in the service of God.

And to avoid such a great error and inconvenience, since it is from God in the first place and then from your Kingdoms and from Your Highness that all the good and drugs and medicines have come to save us, we beg of you to be agreeable and kind enough to send us two physicians and two apothecaries and one surgeon, so that they may come with

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their drug-stores and all the necessary things to stay in our Kingdoms, because we are in extreme need of them all and each of them. We shall do them all good and shall benefit them by all means, since they are sent by Your Highness, who we thank for your work in their coming. We beg of Your Highness as a great favor to do this for us, because besides being good in itself it is in the service of God as we have said above. [Dated October 18, 1526]

Setting Up Shop *

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: For more than a hundred years —from 1441 to 1553—the Portuguese monopolized trade along the West African coast, dealing mostly in gold, ivory, and pepper. (Notice the location of contemporary Ivory Coast and Ghana, formerly the Gold Coast.) As we have seen, slaves were also brought to Portugal. By the middle of the sixteenth century, according to one writer, "a vast majority of the inhabitants of the southernmost province [of Portugal] were Negroids, and even up as far as Lisbon, Negroes outnumbered the whites. The two races intermingled, resulting in the Negroid charatceristics of the Portuguese nation even today."

As significant as the early slave trade was, there was a limit to the number of African laborers Europe could absorb. By the seventeenth century, however, the situation had changed dramatically. The new colonies in North and South America and the Caribbean had large plantations which required workers, and they looked to Africa to meet the needs.

Responding to the increased demand for African labor, the British, the French, and the Dutch entered the West African trade and began to compete with the Portuguese

* Adapted from J. Matthews, *A Voyage to the River Sierra Leone*, London, 1788, pp. 142-46.

for a share of the "black gold." From 1441 to 1870, it is estimated that more than 50 million Africans were lost to the slave trade, many of whom died en route to the coast or on board ship.

The selection that follows is adapted from a first-hand account of how slaves were bought in Africa. The author, an Englishman, went to Sierra Leone in 1785 as an agent for a British slave-trading firm. The book from which this selection was taken was published in 1788.

As you read "Setting Up Shop," think of these questions:

How did the Europeans get their slaves?

How were the slaves first captured?]

When the adventurer arrives upon the coast with a suitable cargo—which for this place consists of European and Indian cotton and linen goods, silk handkerchiefs, coarse blue and red woolen clothes, fine scarlet cloth, coarse and fine hats, worsted caps, guns, powder, shot, sabres, lead bars, iron bars, pewter basins, copper kettles and pans, iron pots, hardware of various kinds, earthen and glasswar leather trunks, beads of various sorts, silver and gold rings and ornaments, paper, coarse and fine check and linen ruffled shirts and caps, British and foreign spirits and tobacco—he dispatches his boats properly equipped to the different rivers.

On their arrival, the traders immediately apply to the head man of the town, inform him of their business, and request his protection. If he agrees he will either be himself their landlord or appoint a respectable person, who becomes responsible for the safety and goods of the stranger, and also for the recovery of all money lent. This business finished and

proper presents made (for nothing is done without presents), they then proceed to trade either by lending their goods to the natives, who carry them up into the country, or by waiting till trade is brought to them. The former is the easier way, when they fall into good hands; but the latter is always the safer.

When the country people come down themselves to trade with the whites, they are obliged to apply to the inhabitants of the villages where the trading posts are kept, to serve as brokers and interpreters.

When a slave is brought to be sold, he is first carefully examined to see that there is no blemish or defect in him; if approved, you then agree upon the price at so many bars and give the dealer so many flints or stones to count with; the goods are then delivered to him piece by piece, for which he returns so many stones for each, to its denominated value; and they always take care to begin with those articles which they judge most essential.

Besides dealing directly with the natives, slavers also barter with the white traders resident on the coast or with the trading posts established there, who take their whole cargo at once and deliver them slaves, camwood, ivory, etc., according to their agreement, in a certain time.

From the great number of slaves which are annually exported from this place and the parts adjacent, amounting to about three thousand annually, one would imagine that the country would, in time, be depopulated; instead, no loss of numbers is perceived; and, from every account we have been able to acquire from the natives themselves, who travel into the interior country, it is extraordinarily populous; but how such a number of slaves is acquired is a mystery which I believe no European has ever solved.

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Slave traders are shown here bartering for slaves along the West African coast. Close examination of the slaves as well as branding was part of the process.

The best information I have been able to collect is that a great number are prisoners taken in war and brought down, fifty or a hundred together, by the black slave merchants. Many are sold for witchcraft and other real or invented crimes and are purchased in the country with European goods and salt. Salt is an article so highly valued, and so eagerly sought after, that they will part with their wives and children, and everything dear to them, to obtain it, when they have not slaves to dispose of; and it always makes a part of the merchandise for the purchase of slaves in the interior country. Even though salt is in such great demand, the natives of the seacoast will not permit the import of it in European vessels, because it would interfere with the only article of their own manufacture, which they have for inland trade.

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Slaves, Guns, More Slaves

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: One question that always arises when discussing the slave trade is this: How could Africans sell their own people?

To begin with, a form of slavery had existed for centuries before the coming of the European. As already mentioned, however, this "slavery" was far different from what later developed under the trans-Atlantic system. Traditional African slaves were usually prisoners of war who were often returned to their own people for a price, but were sometimes sold.

The Europeans took advantage of this African practice and began to offer attractive merchandise in exchange for slaves. Some African chiefs and kings sold their prisoners of war to the Europeans. In exchange they often received guns, which made them all the more powerful. The chiefs without guns were then put at a great disadvantage.

Almost overnight, it became necessary for a chief to possess guns in order to maintain his power. Otherwise his people would be taken by opposing chiefs. And since the guns came from the Europeans, and the Europeans demanded slaves in exchange, more and more African chiefs began to engage in the selling of prisoners. Guns, and therefore slavery, became a necessary part of survival.

In a very real sense, then, Africans were forced by this vicious cycle to sell other Africans.

Moreover, the Europeans competed among themselves for slaves, which escalated the entire enterprise even fur-

ther. If the English, for example, gave guns to a cooperative chief, then the Dutch, the French, or the Portuguese felt that they had to give guns to their "friends," for otherwise the English would get all the slaves. The net result of this arms race was a great increase in hostilities among Africans. The Europeans, then, *increased* tribal warfare; they did not decrease it, as is sometimes thought. More warfare, after all, resulted in more prisoners and therefore more slaves—exactly what the Europeans wanted.

The selection that follows shows the escalation trap that many African traders fell into. The first two parts, "Slaves" and "Guns," are adapted from the writings of William Bosman, a Dutch slave trader who worked in West Africa at the end of the seventeenth century. Notice that he disagrees with Matthews, in the last reading, contending that Africans did *not* sell their own children or relatives. As a trader he would have known if such practices had taken place. And as a European he probably would have pointed it out. The last part of the selection, "More Slaves," is adapted from a first-hand account written by a Swedish traveler, C. B. Wadstrom, in the late eighteenth century.

As you read this selection, think of these questions:

Why would Europeans feel that the slave trade was necessary?

What would have happened to the slave trade if the French had never given arms to the Moors?]

SLAVES*

The first business of one of our traders when he comes to Fida [later called Whydah, the most important slave port of

* This section and the next, "Guns," are adapted from William Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of Guinea,* London, 1705.

the African west coast] is to satisfy the customs of the African king and leaders. This usually means paying about 100 pounds in Guinea value, after which we have free license to trade, which is announced throughout the whole land by the crier.

But first, before we can deal with any person, we are obliged to buy all of the king's personal stock of slaves at a set price; this is commonly one third or one fourth higher than ordinary. Having done this, we are free to deal with all the king's subjects. But if there happens to be no stock of slaves, the trader must then run the risk of trusting the inhabitants with goods to the value of one or two hundred slaves. The inhabitants then send the goods to the country, sometimes 200 miles inland, to buy slaves at the markets. You should be informed that markets of men here are kept in the same manner as those of beasts with us.

Many of our countrymen [in Holland] fondly imagine that parents here sell their children, men their wives, and one brother the other. But those who think so deceive themselves; for this never happens on any account except necessity or some great crime. Most of the slaves that are offered to us are prisoners of war, which are sold by the victors as their booty.

When these slaves come to Fida, they are put in prison all together. When we are ready to buy them, they are all brought out together in a large plain where our surgeons examine them thoroughly, even to the smallest detail. All the slaves are forced to stand naked for the examination, both men and women; no distinction is made for the sake of modesty. Those which are approved as good are set on one side; and the lame or faulty are set on the other as *invalides*. The *invalides* are those over 35 years old, or those who are

maimed in the arms, legs, hands, or feet, or who have lost a tooth, are gray-haired, have films over their eyes, or are afflicted with several other diseases.

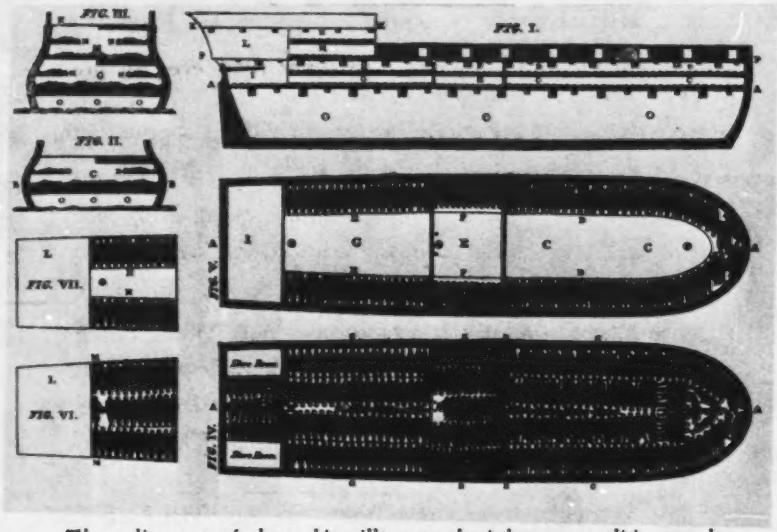
The *invalides* and the maimed being thrown out, as I have told you, the remainder are numbered, and it is recorded who delivered them. In the meantime, a burning iron, with the mark or name of the companies, lies in the fire, ready to put our mark on the slave's breast.

This is done so we may distinguish our slaves from the slaves belonging to the English, French, or others [who also mark their slaves]. This also prevents the Negroes from exchanging bad slaves for good ones, which they are very good at.

I doubt not but this trade seems very barbarous to you, but since it is followed by mere necessity it must go on. But we still take all possible care not to burn them too hard, especially the women, who are more tender than the men.

We are seldom detained in the buying of these slaves, because their price is established, the women being one fourth or fifth cheaper than the men. When we are agreed with the owners of the slaves, they are returned to their prison. From that time on, they are kept at our cost, which is two pence a day a slave. This serves to keep them alive, like our criminals, on bread and water.

To save costs, we send them on board our ships at the very first opportunity. The masters of the ships first strip them of all they have on their backs, so they come aboard stark naked, women as well as men. They are forced to stay in this condition unless the master of the ship is willing (as he often is) to give them something to cover their nakedness.



These diagrams of slave ships illustrate the inhuman conditions under which slaves had to exist during the "Middle Passage." The need to use all available space, a purely economic consideration, took precedence over all humane factors.

GUNS

The African military leaders along the coast are highly skilled. 'Tis not unpleasant to see them exercise their army. They lead their men so cleverly, sending them several ways at the same time—sitting, creeping, lying, and so forth. It is really to be admired that they never hurt one another.

Perhaps you wonder how the Negroes come to be furnished with firearms. But you will be astonished when you learn that we sell them incredible quantities. We are giving them the knife to cut our own throats. But we are forced to it, for if we did not, they might be supplied by the English, Danes, or Brandenburghers [Germans]. And if we all agreed

not to sell them any arms, the private traders [considered illegal by the trading companies] would furnish them.

Firearms and gunpowder have been the most popular merchandise here for a long time. If we did not supply them, we would not get our share of the trade.

MORE SLAVES*

The Moors, who inhabit the countries north of the Senegal River, have a most horrible reputation for their wars of robbery. They cross the river and, attacking the Negroes, carry many of them off. There are many who make a living from such attacks.

The French, to encourage them in this, make annual presents to the Moorish kings. The presents are given under certain conditions: first, that their subjects shall not carry any of their gum to the English, and second, that they shall be ready on all occasions to furnish slaves. To help them fulfill this second condition, the French never fail to supply them with ammunition, guns, and other instruments of war.

To confirm what I have now said, I shall put down the following example:

The King of Almammy had, in the year 1787, very much to his honor, enacted a law forbidding any slave whatever to be marched through his territories. At this time several French vessels lay at anchor in the Senegal, waiting for slaves. The route of the black traders, because of the King's law, was blocked, and the slaves had to be carried to other parts. The French, unable therefore to fill their ships, protested to

* Adapted from C. B. Wadstrom, *Observations on the Slave Trade . . . made in 1787 and 1788 in Company with D. A. Sparrman and Captain Arrhenius*, London, 1789.

the King. But the King was not willing to listen, and he returned the presents which had been sent him by the Senegal Company, of which I myself was a witness. At the same time, the King declared that all the riches of that company would not make him change his mind.

In this situation, the French were obliged to turn to their old friends, the Moors. As on previous occasions, the Moors were ready and active. They set off in raiding to surprise the innocent Negroes and to bring them the horrors of war. Many unfortunate prisoners were sent, and for some time continued to be sent in. I was once curious enough to wish to see some of those that had just arrived. I applied to the director of the company, who conducted me to the slave prisons. I there saw the unfortunate captives, chained two and two together by the foot.

A second source of slaves for the Europeans is pillage, which is of two kinds: public and private. It is public when practiced by the direction of the king, private when practiced by individuals. It is practiced by both blacks and whites. This last I call robbery.

The public pillage is, of all others, the most plentiful source, and it maintains and furthers the slave trade. The kings of Africa [whom I have visited] become excited by the merchandise shown them, which consists primarily of strong liquors. Hence they give orders to their military to attack their own villages in the night.

*The Story of a Slave**

PART I

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: Almost all the accounts we have of the slave trade come from Europeans. As a result, we know more about the business of buying slaves than about the experience of being a slave.

Fortunately, however, a few documents do exist that give an inside view from an African perspective. One of the most famous is *The Early Travels of Olaudah Equiano,* the autobiography of a liberated Ibo slave, written in 1789. The next two readings are taken from this book.

Equiano was kidnapped from his home when he was only 11 years old. The year was 1756; the place was eastern Nigeria, or Biafra. For several months Equiano was passed from African owner to African owner, until finally he was brought to the coast and sold to British slave merchants for the sum of 172 cowries (shells used for money). He was first shipped to Barbados, in the West Indies, then to Virginia, and eventually to England, where he fought with his master in the Seven Years' War. Because of his service Equiano thought he would be freed, but when the war ended in 1763 he was sent back to the West Indies. He was then 17 years old.

* Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano,* London, 1789, pp. 3-57.

Fortunately, an American Quaker bought Equiano and made him assistant to a ship's captain. With the captain's help, Equiano was able to develop his own small trading business, and within three years he earned enough money to buy his freedom. The price was 40 pounds. A year later, in 1767, he returned to England, where he became a citizen and a leader in the antislavery movement.

As you read this selection, which describes Equiano's life from his kidnap to his sale to British slavers on the West African coast, think of these questions:

How would you describe Equiano's treatment by African owners?

How did his treatment change when he was sold to the British?]

One day, when all our people were gone out to their work [in the fields] as usual, and only I and my dear sister were left to mind the house, two men and a woman got over our walls, and in a moment seized us both; and, without giving us time to cry out or make resistance, they stopped our mouths and ran off with us into the nearest wood. Here they tied our hands and continued to carry us as far as they could, till night came on, when we reached a small house where the robbers halted for refreshment and spent the night.

We were then unbound, but were unable to take any food; and, being quite overpowered by fatigue and grief, our only relief was some sleep, which [eased] our misfortune for a short time. The next morning we left the house and continued traveling all the day. For a long time we had kept to the woods, but at last we came into a road which I believed

Olaudah Equiano.

I knew. I had now some hopes of being [saved]; for we had advanced but a little way before I discovered some people at a distance, on which I began to cry out for their assistance; but my cries had no other effect than to make them tie me faster and stop my mouth, and then they put me into a large sack. They also stopped my sister's mouth and tied her hands; and in this manner we proceeded till we were out of the sight of these people. . . .

My sister and I were then separated. . . . At length, after many days' traveling, I got into the hands of a chieftain in a very pleasant country. This man had two wives and some children, and they all [treated] me extremely well and did all they could to comfort me, particularly the first wife, who was something like my mother. Although I was a great

many days journey from my father's house, yet these people spoke exactly the same language with us. This first master of mine, as I may call him, was a smith; and my principal employment was working his bellows, which were the same kind as I had seen in my vicinity.

* * *

. . . My master's only daughter and child by his first wife sickened and died, which affected him so much that for some time he was almost frantic and really would have killed himself, had he not been watched and prevented. However, in a small time afterwards he recovered, and I was again sold. I was now carried to the left of the sun's rising, through many dreary wastes and dismal woods, amidst the hideous roarings of wild beasts. The people I was sold to used to carry me very often when I was tired, either on their shoulders or on their backs. . . .

From the time I left my own nation I always found somebody that understood me till I came to the seacoast. The languages of different nations did not totally differ, nor were they so [complicated] as those of the Europeans, particularly the English. They were therefore easily learned; and, while I was journeying thus through Africa, I acquired two or three different tongues. In this manner I had been traveling for a considerable time, when one evening, to my great surprise, whom should I see brought to the house where I was but my dear sister.

As soon as she saw me she gave a loud shriek and ran into my arms—I was quite overpowered; neither of us could speak, but, for a considerable time, clung to each other in mutual embraces, unable to do anything but weep. Our meeting affected all who saw us; and indeed, I must acknowledge,

in honor of those [black] destroyers of human rights, that I never met with any ill treatment or saw any offered to their slaves, except tieing them, when necessary, to keep them from running away.

When these people knew we were brother and sister, they [allowed] us to be together; and the man to whom I supposed we belonged lay with us, he in the middle, while she and I held one another by the hands across his breast all night; and thus for a while we forgot our misfortunes in the joy of being together; but even this small comfort was soon to have an end, for scarcely had the fatal morning appeared when she was again torn from me forever! I was now more miserable, if possible, than before. . . .

I did not long remain after my sister. I was again sold, and carried through a number of places, till, after traveling a considerable time, I came to a town called Timnah, in the most beautiful country I had yet seen in Africa. It was extremely rich, and there were many rivulets which flowed through it, and supplied a large pond in the center of the town, where the people washed. . . . I had been about two or three days at [the house of my new master] when a wealthy widow, a neighbor of his, came there one evening and brought her an only son, a young gentleman about my own age and size. Here they saw me; and, having taken a fancy to me, I was bought from the merchant, and went home with them. Her house and premises were situated close to one of those rivulets I have mentioned, and were the finest I ever saw in Africa: they were very extensive, and she had a number of slaves to attend her. The next day I was washed and perfumed, and, when mealtime came, I was led into the presence of my mistress and ate and drank before her with her son. This filled me with astonishment, and I could

scarce help expressing my surprise that the young gentleman should suffer me, who was bound, to eat with him who was free; and not only so, but that he would not at any time either eat or drink till I had taken first, because I was the eldest, which was agreeable to our custom. Indeed, everything here, and all their treatment of me, made me forget that I was a slave.

The language of these people resembled ours so nearly that we understood each other perfectly. They had also the very same customs as we. There were likewise slaves daily to attend us, while my young master and I, with other boys, sported with our darts and bows and arrows, as I had been used to do at home. In this resemblance to my former happy state, I passed about two months, and I now began to think I was to be adopted into the family, and was beginning to [become accustomed] to my situation, and to forget by degrees my misfortunes, when all at once the delusion vanished; for, without the least previous knowledge, one morning early, while my dear master and companion was still asleep, I was awakened out of my [dreams] to fresh sorrow, and hurried away. . . .

Thus I continued to travel, sometimes by land, sometimes by water, through different countries and various nations, till, at the end of six or seven months after I had been kidnapped, I arrived at the seacoast. . . .

The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast was the sea, and a slaveship, which was then riding at anchor and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror, which I am yet at a loss to describe. . . .

When I was carried on board I was immediately handled and tossed up, to see if I were sound, by some of the crew;

and I was now persuaded that I had got into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions, too, differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke, which was very different from any I had ever heard, united to confirm me in this belief. Indeed, such were the horrors of my views and fears at the moment that if ten thousand worlds had been my own, I would have freely parted with them all to have exchanged my condition with that of the meanest slave in my own country.

When I looked round the ship too, and saw a large furnace or copper boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their [faces] expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted of my fate; and, quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted. When I recovered a little, I found some black people about me who I believed were some of those who brought me on board and had been receiving their pay; they talked to me in order to cheer me, but all in vain. I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and long hair. They told me I was not. . . .

Soon after this, the blacks who brought me on board went off and left me abandoned to despair. I now saw myself deprived of all chance of returning to my native country or even the least glimpse of hope of gaining the shore, which I now considered as friendly; and I even wished for my former slavery, in preference to my present situation, which was filled with horrors of every kind, still heightened by my ignorance of what I was to undergo. I was not long [allowed] to indulge my grief; I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a [smell] in my nostrils as I had

never experienced in my life; so that, with the [horrible] stench and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste anything.

I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me; but soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables; and, on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands and laid me across [a large bar] and tied my feet while the other flogged me severely. I had never experienced anything of this kind before; and, although not being used to the water, I naturally feared that element the first time I saw it; yet nevertheless, could I have got over the nettings, I would have jumped over the side; but I could not; and, besides, the crew used to watch us very closely who were not chained down to the decks, lest we should leap into the water: and I have seen some of these poor African prisoners most severely cut for attempting to do so, and hourly whipped for not eating. This, indeed, was often the case with myself.

The Story of a Slave

PART II

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: In the first part of "The Story of a Slave" we saw how Equiano was kidnapped, carried overland by a series of African owners, and finally sold to the British on the coast. His treatment under his African masters was quite humane. "Indeed," he says, "everything here, and all their treatment of me, made me forget that I was a slave."

Under the British, however, his condition changed drastically. He was put in the hold of a ship, where the stench and the crying of his fellow captives made him sick; he was flogged for not eating; and, finally, he was driven to the point where he "wished for the last friend, death."

At the same time, Equiano looked back somewhat fondly on his former slave state, and with good reason. Commenting on the condition of slaves in Africa, he says: "How different was their condition from that of slaves in the West Indies! With us they do no more work than other members of the community, even their master. Their food, clothing, and lodging were nearly the same as theirs [the masters'], except that they were not permitted to eat with those who were free-born; and there was hardly more difference between them and freemen than between members of a family

and the head of the family. Some of these slaves even have slaves under them as their own property, and for their own use."

Treatment of this sort was never provided by the Europeans or Americans. In Part II of "The Story of a Slave," Equiano shows dramatically how the two systems differed. He relates his experience on board ship and his contact with the slave market in Barbados.

As you read this section, think of these questions:

Is there a rational reason for the Europeans' refusal to feed fish to the slaves?

Why would slaveowners want to break up slave families?]

In a little time after, amongst the poor chained men, I found some of my own nation, which in a small degree gave ease to my mind. I inquired of them what was to be done with us. They told me we were to be carried to these white people's country to work for them. I then was a little revived and thought, if it were no worse than working, my situation was not so desperate: but still I feared I should be put to death, the white people looked and acted, as I thought, [so savagely]; for I had never seen among any people such instances of brutal cruelty; and this not only shown toward us blacks but also to some of the whites themselves. One white man in particular I saw, when we were permitted to be on deck, flogged so unmercifully with a large rope near the foremast that he died in consequence of it; and they tossed him over the side as they would have done [an empty keg].

This made me fear these people all the more; and I

expected nothing less than to be treated in the same manner. I could not help expressing my fears to some of my countrymen: I asked them if these people had no country, but lived in the hollow [of] the ship. They told me they did not, but came from a distant [state]. "Then," said I, "how comes it in all our country we never heard of them?" They told me, because they lived so very far off.

I then asked, where were their women? Had they any like themselves? I was told they had. "And why," said I, "do we not see them?" They answered, because they were left behind. I asked how the vessel could go. They told me they could not tell, but that there were cloths put upon the masts by the help of the ropes I saw, and then the vessel went on, and the white men had some spell or magic they put in the water when they like in order to stop the vessel. I was exceedingly amazed at this account and really thought they were spirits. I therefore wished much to be [away from] them, for I expected they would sacrifice me: but my wishes were in vain, for we were so quartered that it was impossible for any of us to make our escape. . . .

At last, when the ship we were in had got in all her cargo, they made ready with many fearful noises, and we were all put under deck, so that we could not see how they managed the vessel. But this disappointment was the least of my sorrow. The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so terrible that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air; but now that the whole ship's cargo were confined together, it became absolutely [sickening]. The closeness of the place and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This

produced [uncontrolled perspiring], so that the air soon became unfit for [breathing] from a variety of [unbearable] smells, and brought on a sickness amongst the slaves, of which many died, thus falling victims to the [inhuman greed] of their purchasers.

This wretched situation was again aggravated by the [chafing] of the chains, now become [intolerable], and the filth of the [toilet] tubs, into which children often fell and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women and the groans of the dying rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable. Happily perhaps for myself I was soon reduced so low here that it was thought necessary to keep me almost always on deck; and [because of] my extreme youth I was not put in [chains].

In this situation I expected every hour to share the fate of my companions, some of whom were almost daily brought upon deck at the point of death, which I began to hope would soon put an end to my miseries. Often did I think many of the inhabitants of the deep much more happy than myself; I envied them the freedom they enjoyed, and as often wished I could change my condition for theirs. Every circumstance I met with served only to render my state more painful and heighten my fears and my opinion of the cruelty of the whites.

One day they had taken a number of fishes; and when they had killed and satisfied themselves with as many as they thought fit, to our astonishment who were on the deck, rather than give any of them to us to eat, as we expected, they tossed the remaining fish into the sea again, although we begged and prayed for some as well as we could, but in vain; and some of my countrymen, being pressed by hunger, took an opportunity, when they thought no one saw them, of

trying to get a little privately; but they were discovered and given some very severe floggings.

One day, when we had a smooth sea and moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen, who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings and jumped into the sea; immediately another quite dejected fellow, who, on account of his illness was allowed to be out of irons, also followed their example; and I believe many more would very soon have done the same if they had not been prevented by the ship's crew, who were instantly alarmed. Those of us that were the most active were in a moment put down under the deck; and there was such a noise and confusion amongst the people of the ship as I never heard before, to stop her and get the boat out to go after the slaves. . . . Two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other, and afterwards flogged him unmercifully for thus attempting to prefer death to slavery.

In this manner we continued to undergo more hardships than I can now relate, hardships which are inseparable from this accursed trade. Many a time we were near suffocation from the want of fresh air, which we were often without for whole days together. This, and the stench of the [toilet] tubs, carried off many. . . .

At last we came in sight of the island of Barbados, at which the whites on board gave a great shout and made many signs of joy to us. We did not know what to think of this; but, as the vessel drew nearer, we plainly saw the harbor, and other ships of different kinds and sizes: and we soon anchored amongst them off Bridge Town. Many merchants and planters now came on board, though it was in the evening. They put us in separate parcels and examined

us attentively. They also made us jump, and pointed to the land, signifying we were to go there. We thought by this we should be eaten by these ugly men, as they appeared to us; and when, soon after, we were all put down under the deck again, there was much dread and trembling among us, and nothing but bitter cries to be heard all the night [because of these fears, so much so] that at last the white people got some old slaves from the land to pacify us. They told us we were not to be eaten but to work, and were soon to go on land where we should see many of our country people. This report eased us much; and sure enough, soon after we landed, there came to us Africans of all languages. We were [led] immediately to the merchant's yard, where we were all penned up together like so many sheep in a fold, without regard to sex or age. As every object was new to me, everything I saw filled me with surprise. . . .

We were not many days in the merchant's custody before we were sold after their usual manner, which is this: on a signal given (as the beat of a drum), the buyers rush at once into the yard where the slaves are confined and make choice of that parcel they like best. The great noise and clamor, and the eagerness visible in the faces of the buyers serve . . . to increase the [fear] of the terrified Africans. . . . In this manner, without scruple, relations and friends are separated, most of them never to see each other again.

I remember in the vessel in which I was brought over, in the men's apartment, there were several brothers who, in the sale, were sold in different lots; and it was very moving on this occasion to see and hear their cries at parting. O, you Christians [in name only]! Might not an African ask you: learned you this from your God, who says unto you, Do unto all men as you would men should do unto you?

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Is it not enough that we are torn from our country and friends to toil for your luxury and lust of gain? Must every tender feeling be likewise sacrificed to your [greed]? Are the dearest friends and relations, now [made even] more dear by their separation . . . , still to be parted from each other, and thus prevented from cheering the gloom of slavery with the small comfort of being together, and mingling their sufferings and sorrow? Why are parents to lose their children, brothers their sisters, or husbands their wives?

Surely this [separation from relatives] is a new refinement in cruelty. [It gives no advantages to the owner but simply] aggravates distress and adds fresh horrors even to the wretchedness of slavery.

*"Ivory First, Child Afterwards"**

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: The slave trade had a profound and devastating effect on Africa, which can be seen even today.

First, it robbed the continent of more than fifty million of its strongest and healthiest men and women. The enormous wealth of this labor was literally stolen from Africa and "deposited" in the "banks" of Europe and America.

Second, it turned African against African. It produced a vicious competition for human life, and it brought guns to make this competition especially violent. The result was an explosion in the size and number of wars in Africa.

Third, it prepared the way for the European takeover during the colonial period. When slaves became the major product of Africa, other products and local crafts suffered. Not only were skilled workers lost to the slave trade itself, but the trade destroyed the incentive to develop cash crops and other sources of wealth, with the result that Africa was left behind other continents in economic development. At the same time, slave wars weakened the various political units of Africa, making them vulnerable to outside control. With a weak economy and weakened armies, Africa was in no position to defend itself against the Europeans.

* Adapted from Albert J. Swann, *Fighting the Slave Hunters in Central Africa*, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1910.

Africans captured in the interior were chained or yoked with a forked branch and then marched to the trading stations on the coast.

Finally, and perhaps most important, the slave trade had a brutalizing effect on the African populace as well as on the slaves themselves. The Africans at home saw their countrymen chained, branded, and sold, their villages burned, their cultures disrupted.

The following selection describes the horrors of a caravan carrying slaves from the interior to the coast, in this case the East Coast. The head of the caravan, Tip-pu-Tib, was a powerful and greatly feared Afro-Arab leader who controlled a large kingdom in what is now the eastern Congo.

This selection was written by Albert J. Swann, an Englishman who went to Africa in 1882 as an agent for the London Missionary Society. By this time the slave trade had been abolished on the West Coast, but it still flourished in the East. Swann's mission, as he explains, was to "cooperate with men and women of various nationalities to under-

mine and finally destroy the Slave Trade that flourished around the great lakes."

The selection relates to the waning days of the slave trade, but the forced-march technique of transporting slaves that it describes was used throughout Africa for over two hundred years. Sometimes more slaves died than reached the Coast.

As you read this selection, think of these questions:

Which slaves would be most likely to reach the Coast?

Why would slavers put "ivory first, child afterwards"?]

. . . We met the notorious Tip-pu-Tib's annual caravan, which had been resting after the long march through Ugogo and the hot passes of Chunyo. As they filed past we noticed many [slaves] chained together by the neck. Others had their necks fastened into the forks of poles six feet long, the ends of which were supported by the men who preceded them. The women, who were as numerous as the men, carried babies on their backs in addition to a tusk of ivory or other burden on their heads. They looked at us with suspicion and fear, having been told that white men always desired to release slaves in order to eat their flesh, like the Upper Congo cannibals.

It is difficult to describe the filthy state of their bodies; in many instances, not only scarred by the cut of the "chicote" [a piece of hide used to enforce obedience], but feet and shoulders were a mass of open sores, made more painful by the swarms of flies which followed the march and lived on the flowing blood. One could not help wondering how many of them have survived the long tramp from the Upper Congo, at least 1,000 miles distant.

The headmen in charge were most polite to us as they passed our camp. Each was armed with a rifle, knife, and spear, and, although decently clothed in cotton garments, they presented a thoroughly villainous appearance.

Addressing one, I pointed out that many of the slaves were unfit to carry loads. To this he smilingly replied:

"They have no choice! *They must go, or die!*"

Then ensued the following conversation:

"Are all these slaves destined for Zanzibar?"

"Most of them, the remainder will stay at the coast."

"Have you lost many of them on the road?"

"Yes! Numbers have died of hunger!"

"Any run away?"

"No, they are too well guarded. Only those who become possessed with the devil try to escape; there is nowhere they could run to if they should go."

"What do you do when they become too ill to travel?"

"Spear them at once!" was the fiendish reply. "For if we did not, others would pretend they were ill in order to avoid carrying their loads. No! We never leave them alive on the road: they all know our custom."

"I see women carrying not only a child on their backs, but, in addition, a tusk of ivory or other burden on their heads. What do you do in their case when they become too weak to carry both child and ivory? Who carries the ivory?"

"She does! We cannot leave valuable ivory on the road. *We spear the child and make her burden lighter.* Ivory first, child afterwards!"

For downright savagery this beat anything I had met with. "Ivory first, child afterwards!" I repeated over and over again. Alas! I was destined many times to witness the truth of that cruel statement.

Thus early in my life I understood what Livingston meant and felt when he wrote the following:

> Besides those actually captured, thousands are killed, or die of their wounds and famine, driven from their homes by the slave-raider. Thousands perish in internecine wars, waged for slaves with their own clansmen or neighbors; slain by the lust for gain which is stimulated by the slave-purchasers. The many skeletons we have seen amongst the rocks and woods, by the pools, and along the paths of the wilderness, all testify to the awful sacrifice of human life which must be attributed directly or indirectly to this trade of hell.

White Man, Rich Man; Black Man, Slave *

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: The African slave trade was created by forces outside Africa.

The major force was the need for cheap labor on the plantations of North and South America. Acting as a huge economic magnet, this force enslaved millions of men and women, pulled them from the West Coast of Africa, deposited them in the Western Hemisphere, and thereby laid the foundation for the economic development of the Americas. It seems safe to say that American prosperity was built on the backs of African workers, who provided much of the needed labor.

The following selection, from Basil Davidson's *History of West Africa, 1000-1800,* explains the conditions in the Americas that led to the demand for African "help." It then explains the system of trade that supported slavery, providing a good overview of the entire slave-trade issue.

As you read this selection, think of these questions:

* From *A History of West Africa 1000-1800,* by Basil Davidson, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1965, pp. 194-99. U.S. edition: Doubleday Anchor Original, *A History of West Africa to the Nineteenth Century,* New York, 1967, pp. 202-06. Copyright © 1965 Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd. Copyright © 1966 by Basil Davidson. Reprinted by permission of Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd. and Doubleday & Co.

Why could the Europeans control the Americas and not Africa?

How did Africans react to slavery in the Americas?]

The slave trade grew big because of European activities in the distant lands beyond the Atlantic.

In 1492, having sailed westward across the Atlantic, Christopher Columbus and his men arrived at some islands of the Caribbean Sea, which lies between North and South America. Knowing nothing of the existence of the American continent (although northern Europeans had in fact reached it many centuries earlier), Columbus believed that he had come near to India. So he called these Caribbean islands the West Indies, a name they still bear. Others followed Columbus. They entered the vast land masses of North, Central and South America.

These others, who were Spanish soldiers and adventurers, ruined the American peoples whom they found. Their intention was not trade, but loot; not peace, but war; not partnership, but enslavement. They fell upon these lands with greed and the fury of destruction. And the American peoples, unlike the Africans, were unable to defend themselves. Being at an earlier stage of social and technical development than the Africans, they fell easy victims to Spanish violence. Along the coast of Guinea, the Portuguese and other Europeans had begun by trying their hands at violence. But they had given that up. The Africans they met were too strong for them. In the Americas it was different.

There was terrible destruction of the "Indians," the name that was mistakenly given by these raiders to the native-born

American peoples. A Spanish report of 1518, only twenty-six years after the first voyage of Columbus across the Atlantic, says that when the island of Cuba was discovered it was reckoned to contain more than a million "Indians," but "today their number does not exceed 11,000. And judging from what has happened, there will be none of them left in three or four years' time, unless some remedy is applied."

No remedy was applied, in Cuba or anywhere else; or none that made much difference. Whole populations of enslaved "Indians," forced to work for Spanish masters in mines and on plantations, withered and died, or rebelled and were killed.

Trying desperately to find new sources of free labor, the Spanish began sending out their own people under conditions that were no different from slavery. But they could not find enough of them. Where else to look for slaves? The answer was West Africa. Already the Portuguese and Spanish had imported a few West African captives into their own countries. Now they began to export West Africans to the West Indies and the mainland of the Americas.

In this they faced enormous difficulties. They had first to seize or buy their African captives and bring them back to Spain and Portugal. They had then to get these men across the Atlantic without entirely ruining their health, no small problem in the foul old sailing ships of those days. Lastly, they had to turn these captives, or those who were still alive after the crossing of the seas, into slaves. But this, too, proved very difficult. For the Africans resisted enslavement by every means they could. They broke out in revolt after revolt, led by heroes whose names we shall never know. They fought to the death. They spread fear and panic among the Spanish settlers. They went up into the mountains or deep into the

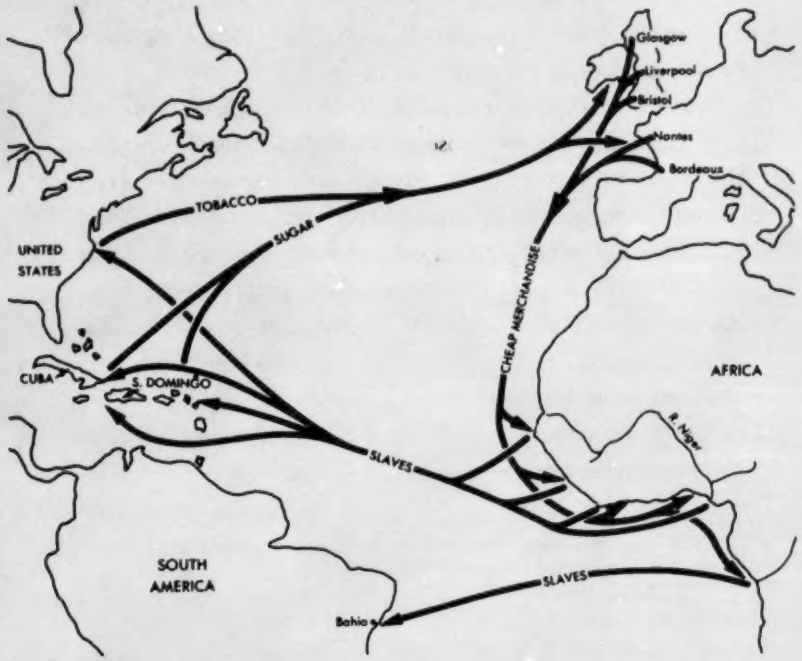
forests and founded free republics of their own. They made history in their fight for freedom.

But Spanish arms and organization, together with the golden profits of the slave trade, proved too strong. In 1515 the Spanish shipped back to Europe their first cargo of West Indian sugar, then a luxury of great price. And in 1518, a grim date in the history of the Atlantic slave trade, the Spanish carried their first cargo of captives directly from West Africa to the West Indies. After that, throughout the sixteenth century, the slave trade grew by leaps and bounds.

It continued to grow in later years. As the wealth and size of the American plantation-colonies became ever larger, so also did the demand for slave labor. There developed what was to become known as the *triangular trade,* a commercial system which greatly helped to build the continued industrial and technical progress of western Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

This new and potent trading system, starting in the late sixteenth century, was called triangular because it had three distinct stages or "sides." Each of these "sides" brought a profit to the merchants and manufacturers of western Europe.

In the first stage or "side" of this trade, merchants in the big ports of western Europe bought and shipped to West Africa goods such as cottons, alcoholic spirits, metalware, and firearms, for sale to African chiefs and kings in exchange for slaves. These slaves were prisoners of war or condemned criminals. If they had stayed in West Africa, they would have been domestic or household slaves . . . [as Equiano was before he was shipped to the West Indies]. African chiefs and kings often exchanged such "slaves" among themselves. They saw no reason for not selling them to Europeans. So it was fairly easy for the Europeans to buy captives.



The second "side" of the triangular trade lay in taking these captives across the Atlantic, usually in chains, and selling them in exchange for sugar, tobacco, rum, and other products to plantation-owners, who turned them into real slaves.

The third "side" consisted in taking the American products back to Europe and selling them at very high prices.

On the Guinea coast the Europeans went on buying gold and other goods. Increasingly, though, they concentrated on buying captives, for the profits of the "triangular trade" became ever greater. The profits became so great that in the eighteenth century the Europeans even brought gold from

Brazil to the *Gold Coast* (modern Ghana) in order to buy captives they could not otherwise obtain.

This slave trade enormously enriched the nations of western Europe. But it made those of West Africa much poorer. Most of this still lay in the future; yet the beginnings of this evil trade were also part of the sixteenth-century scene. The cloud then was no bigger than a man's hand; but soon it grew into a tempest, and the tempest blew and raged for years, even for centuries.

*Ending the Slave Trade**

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: The slave trade came to an end for two main reasons: guilt and money.

The guilt was felt by Europeans—mostly Englishmen—who recognized the evil of putting other human beings in chains. Beginning around 1750, churchmen in England delivered fiery speeches against the trade, arguing that all men were created equal in the eyes of God. An abolition movement developed in England, antislavery organizations were formed, and in 1807 the British Parliament passed a law making it illegal for British ships to take part in the slave trade. In 1833 Parliament abolished slavery entirely in British territories.

Other countries, however, were not quick to follow Britain's lead. In fact, they fought the abolitionist movement. Ships from Spain, Portugal, and the United States continued to transport slaves until the latter half of the nineteenth century. For years English ships patrolled the coast of Africa, trying to prevent what England, much to her credit, regarded as illegal trade. The United States did not abolish slavery until 1863, and Brazil, not until 1888.

The antislavery movement probably could not have succeeded on humanitarian grounds alone, as important as

* Adapted from a report by Robert Craigie, captain of the British ship *Scout*, published in *Papers Relating to Engagements Entered into by King Pepple and the Chiefs of Bonny with Her Majesty's Naval Officers on the Subject of the Suppression of the Slave Trade*, 1848.

these were. It needed the help of economics. In fact, it can be argued that money played a more important role than morality in ending the slave trade. The Europeans at this time were going through the Industrial Revolution. Machines were replacing men, making slave labor less important. Moreover, the machines needed raw materials, much of which came from Africa. Thus it became more profitable to keep the Africans in Africa producing minerals and other raw materials than to send them to American plantations.

Also, Europeans were beginning to think that slave labor did not pay. They accepted the economic theories of Adam Smith, a famous English economist, who argued that free labor was more profitable in the long run because free men work harder and, of course, spend more money, which helps the economy. Furthermore, freemen support themselves, rather than depending on their masters.

All of these reasons, humanitarian and economic, combined to suggest that the slave trade should end. But stopping the trade was not easy. After all, it had become part of the African economic system.

The next selection is taken from a report by an English captain, trying to persuade an African chief from eastern Nigeria to stop trading in slaves. The report was printed in 1848.

As you read this selection, think of these questions:

Why was the African chief reluctant to stop trading in slaves?

Who or what was responsible for the chief's attitudes?]

King Pepple of Bonny, accompanied by Anna Pepple, his *juju* man [high priest], and Hee Chee, Anna Pepple's secre-

tary, for the first time went on board a man-of-war, for the purpose of paying a visit to Captain Craigie, where he was received with the usual salutes. When the King and his party had finished breakfast, Captain Craigie presented to His Majesty a box containing presents from the English government, which the King desired might be opened.

Captain Craigie then proceeded to read to King Pepple and his party the dispatch of Lord Palmerston dated 14th April, 1838, relative to slave abolition, and strongly impressed upon His Majesty that part which states that treaties had already been made between England and other African princes for the purpose of putting an end to the slave trade, and that in those cases the Articles of Treaty had been faithfully maintained.

Captain Craigie assured the King that England ever dispensed justice and would encourage the lawful commerce of the Bonny in every way; that she would send out ships in abundance for their palm-oil and other products; and if the Bonny men directed their attention properly to these, he was certain they could easily get rich without exporting slaves. . . .

The King, Anna Pepple, and the *juju* man for some time remained silent; the idea of making such a proposal seemed to them to be incomprehensible. At length Anna Pepple said, "If we cease to sell slaves to foreign ships, our principal source of wealth will be gone; the English were our first customers, and the trade has since been our chief means of support."

Captain Craigie: "How much would you lose if you gave up selling slaves for exportation?"

Anna Pepple: "Too much—very much—we gain more by one slaveship than by five palm-oil ships."

Hee Chee, Anna Pepple's secretary: "We depend entirely

on selling slaves and palm-oil for our subsistence; suppose, then, the slave trade done away with, the consumption of palm-oil in England to stop, the crop to fail, or that the English ships did not come to Bonny, what are we to do? We must starve, as it is contrary to our religion to cultivate the ground."

Captain Craigie: "There need be no fear of the demand for palm-oil in England ceasing, or of English ships not coming out to the Bonny to take from you your products in exchange for British merchandise; but if you can show clearly that your losses will be so great by giving up slave exportation, I think it possible that the Queen of England may in some measure repay you for your loss."

Juju man: "Suppose a Spanish ship comes to Bonny with goods to exchange for slaves; are we to send her away? This morning you made a breakfast for me, and as I was hungry it would have been foolish not to have eaten; in like manner, if the Spanish ship had things which we stood in need of, it would be equally foolish not to take them."

Captain Craigie: "How would the abolition of slave importation so materially affect you?"

King Pepple: "It would affect myself and chiefs thus—first, by stopping the revenues arising from slaves' being exported; second, our own profit on slaves, and that arising from piloting slave ships up to and out of Bonny, would be lost."

Captain Craigie: "I again assure you that the slave trade must be stopped. Not one vessel can escape from the Bonny, as you will know from the *Scout*'s blockade of the river in 1836 and 1839. If it becomes necessary, I shall anchor a vessel off Juju Point, and to pass her you are aware will be impossible; but as the English government always adopts the

principle of putting an end to evils by friendly agreement rather than by compulsion, and as it is possible that they may be disposed, if your requests are within reasonable limits, to make you an annual repayment for a term of years (perhaps five years), how much would you consider to be sufficient?"

After some consultation among themselves, Hee Chee, Anna Pepple's secretary, said, "The King will take $4,000 yearly."

Captain Craigie: "As I said before, I am not authorized to treat for any sum, but I am certain that $4,000 would be considered too much; indeed, I would not venture to propose more than $2,000. If you say that this sum (for the time above specified) will be sufficient, I shall lay the matter before the English government."

The King, Anna Pepple, the *juju* man, and Hee Chee had a discussion for some time. They for a long while insisted on not naming less than $3,000, till they at last came down to $2,000.

*Treaties for Trade**

[EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: When European merchants shifted their emphasis from slaves to other goods, they opened up a new era in their relations with Africa: the era of the treaty.

The purpose of the treaty was to make sure that merchants had stable markets. A European nation would sign an agreement with an African chief, who promised to trade only with that country. Quite often the treaty would go beyond purely business matters, calling for the establishment of Christian missions or allowing the European country to send soldiers to the area. In many cases the Africans did not realize what they were agreeing to.

The treaty you are about to read was signed on March 19, 1877, concluding an agreement between England and the King of Mellella, River Congo. As you read it, think of these questions:

What were the main interests of the British?

What could this treaty lead to?]

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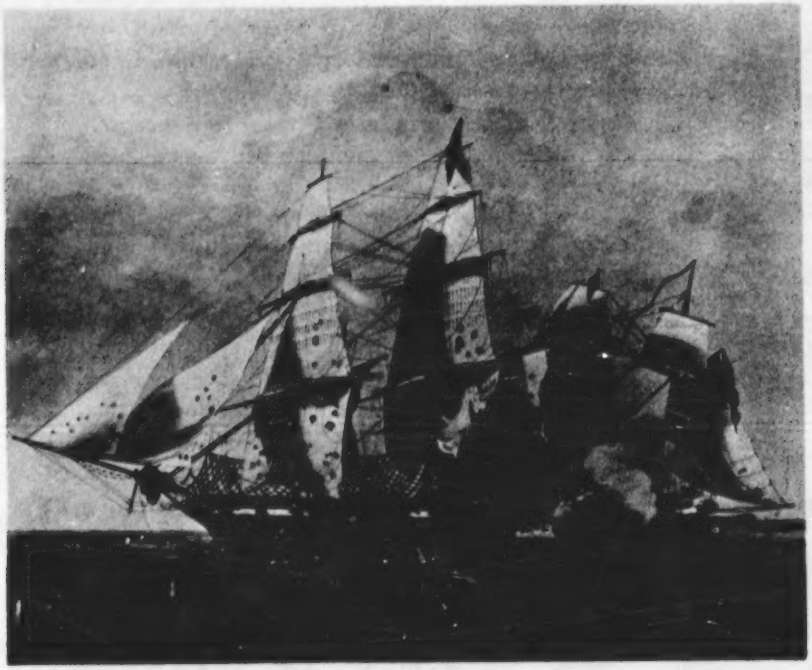
* Adapted from the *British and Foreign State Papers, 1876-1877*, Vol. 68, pp. 670-72.

Leicester Chantrey Keppel, Esquire, Commander of Her Britannic Majesty's ship *Avon,* and Senior Officer of the River Congo, on the part of Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, &c., and the King of Mellella, whose name is hereunto subscribed on the part of himself, his heirs, and successors, have agreed upon the following Articles:

1. The export of slaves to foreign countries is forever abolished in my territory.

2. No European or other person whatever shall be permitted to reside in my territories or those of my heirs or suc-



This painting shows the surrender of a Spanish slave brig to a British ship in 1834. The English tried to enforce their ban on slave trading by patrolling the West African coast.

cessors for the purpose of carrying on in any way the traffic in slaves.

3. If at any time it shall appear that the slave trade is being carried on through or from any part of my territories, the slave trade may be put down by force.

4. The subjects of Her Britannic Majesty and all white foreigners may always trade freely with my people.

5. In the event of any British or other foreign vessels running aground in any part of the River Congo near to my territory, I faithfully promise that I will in no way allow them to be interfered with.

6. Should any British or other foreign vessel, being aground in the river, apply to me for assistance, I promise to render her all help in my power, provided I am fairly paid for my trouble.

7. Should the ships be attacked by pirates or plunderers, I promise assistance by sending my people with arms, and doing all in my power to punish the robbers.

8. If at any time a naval officer of Great Britain shall require guides or armed people to accompany the said officer against pirates or other enemies of the Queen of Great Britain, I promise to provide them.

9. I declare that no human being shall be sacrificed on account of religious or other ceremonies, and that I will prevent the barbarous practice of murdering prisoners of war.

10. Missionaries or other ministers of the Gospel are to be allowed to reside in my territory.

11. In consideration of these engagements, all past offenses of King Mellella against the Queen of Great Britain, &c., are hereby forgiven.

Concluded on board Her Majesty's ship *Avon,* at Mellella, this 19th day of March, 1877.

Leicester C. Keppel, Commander, H.M.S. *Avon*
Mellella, King of Mellella, River Congo ✕
(His mark)

Witnesses to signatures of Contracting Parties:
Andrew W. Rogers, Senior Lieutenant, H.M.S. *Avon*
Henry J. Ollard, Assistant Paymaster, H.M.S. *Avon*
Capeta of Mellella ✕
The Sister of Queen Annazoza ✕ } their marks